CIGAR & SPIRITS

THE GENTLEMAN'S LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

JULY 2016

THE TRUTH BEHIND *BOURBON BARRELS*

THE IPCPR ISSUE

CIGAR BUYERS GUIDE

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PLUS

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CIGAR & SPIRITS

THE GENTLEMAN'S LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

JULY 2016

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Cigar & Spirits Magazine

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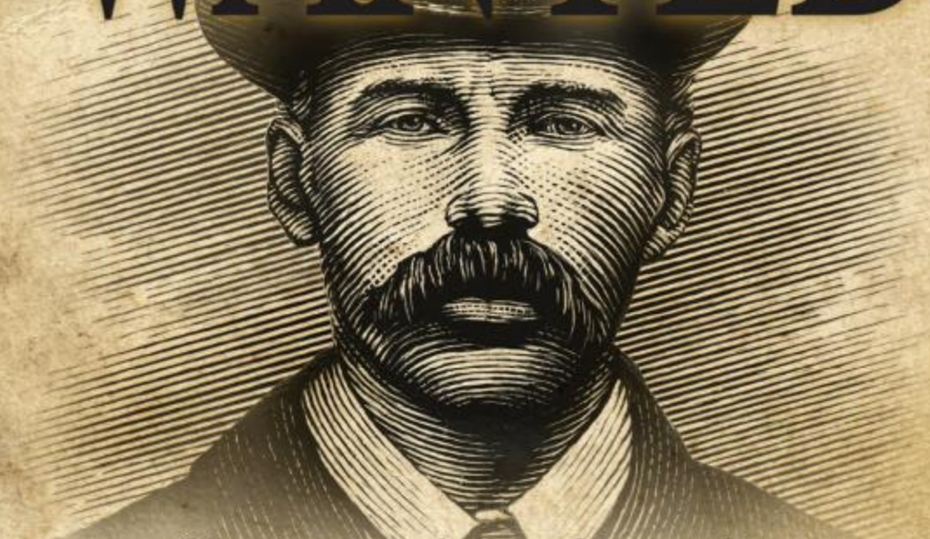
Corrections: Last issue the article, Glasgow Tobacco Lords was incorrectly attributed to Lanee Lee. The author of Glasgow Tobacco Lords should have been attributed to Amanda Keeley-Thurman.

IT'S NICE TO BE

WANTED



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—Cornelius Bailey, AKA Straight Shooter

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Live in The Moment

EVERY TIME I'M ON AN AIRPLANE and I look down I am reminded of how small we are and how many crazy things are going on and how complex and challenging the world can be. The world we live in is immense; yet, strangely so small at the same time.

You see, that's what I love about a cigar-even though we often make cigar smoking complex with our tasting notes, ratings, and reviews, sometimes you just need to sit back and enjoy a cigar for what it is. I think I finally understand what Churchill meant when he said "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar."

We need to take more time in this fast paced life to slow down and just take it all in. I mean we only get one shot at this crazy thing called "Life," right? So be in the moment when you're spending time with your family and friends and just exist in that moment. When you're working with co-workers, or your team of employees strategizing, take the time with them be in that moment.

What I'm getting at is that it's not just important to be live in each moment, but to recognize the existential meaning behind every day. After that moment is gone, you can never recreate it or live it again. Your memory is all that will remain.

Cigar & Spirits Magazine has always been founded on camaraderie first. Whether you're sharing a cigar or a spirit with someone, be certain to take in every laugh, each smile and the sound of every word that is shared. Take every puff of your cigar, and every sip of your spirit and live in that moment.

May we live in the moments of our lives and give it 100% of ourselves.

Cheers,

Lincoln B. Salazar
CEO/Publisher

This issue is dedicated to Kabir, a good man whose smile lit up rooms.

TAKE A TRIP TO A

DESERT OASIS

By Amanda Keeley-Thurman

Hot. Dry. Unforgiving. Alluring. The desert is a place of intense elements and dangerous beauty. Spiky cactuses dot the barren landscape. Tumble weeds roll across dusty roads. Oranges, yellows, pinks and caramels splash across the rocky mountain ranges. Sparkling stars blanket the night sky. There is a mystic to the desert; a romance that intrigues visitors to come and explore.

Despite the rawness of the desert there is opulence to be found. From California to Utah, the fascination of the desert can be indulged while enjoying the comfort and extravagance of a lavish accommodation. These ten luxurious desert resorts are no mirage, they are truly an oasis.

>> Inn at Furnace Creek

>> Omni Ranchos Las Palmas

California

OMNI RANCHO LAS PALMAS RESORT & SPA

Located in the Coachella Valley, just a short drive from Palm Springs is a desert escape that must be experienced. The lush Omni Rancho Las Palmas Resort & Spa is set on 240 acres with five on-site restaurants, a European spa, modern fitness center, 25 tennis courts and a 27-hole golf course designed by Ted Robinson. To keep cool in the desert heat, Splashtopia is everything you would need for an amazing water adventure, including a 450 foot lazy river. If that's not relaxing enough, there is also The Azure Hotel Pool for adults only and the Spa Pool for spa guests to unwind.

JW MARRIOTT

Take a boat tour around the many scenic waterways or hang out with some exotic birds. Yes Toto, we are still in the desert; Palms Springs to be exact. A mecca of exciting shops, bars and restaurants, Palm Springs is a desert playground, but The JW Marriott is a destination in itself! In addition to the lagoons, boats and exotic birds, the resort also has five pools, a wonderful spa, fabulous dining, and two Ted Robinson golf courses, the Valley Course and the Palms Course. After a day of activities what's more relaxing than enjoying a cocktail by a fire pit on the terrace of the Blue Star Lounge?

INN AT FURNACE CREEK

Okay, Palm desert might be the obvious choice, but what about Death Valley? What could possibly be luxurious about a place like Death Valley? After miles of desolate landscape, The Inn at Furnace Creek rises from the desert like a mirage. This 1927 four-diamond hideaway is a very real and welcomed site for weary travelers. This resort encourages guests to indulge the lovely natural wonders the desert has to offer. The whole resort is fed by glacier water of the Travertine Springs, creating this lush oasis in Death Valley. Even the pool is naturally spring fed, warm year round, and with no chlorine.

>> Inn at Furnace Creek

>> JW Marriot

>> Omni Ranchos Las Palmas

>> JW Marriot

>> Omni Ranchos Las Palmas

>> JW Marriot

>> Inn at Furnace Creek

Arizona

ARIZONA INN
Celebrating 85 years of luxury and glamour, Arizona Inn opened its doors during the depression as a symbol of hope. Shining like a star in Tucson for decades, the resort has attracted a few stars of its own. Celebrity guests have been flocking to the Arizona Inn for decades, like President F.D.R, Clark Gable, Gary Cooper, President Kennedy, the Rockefellers, Danny Kaye, John Wayne and Bettie Davis. Still family-owned, the inn has a wonderful warmness of home with the decadence you would expect of a luxury resort. Not only is the surrounding desert landscape breathtaking, but the property's lovely garden bursts with color making every morning a good morning to be waking up at the Arizona Inn.

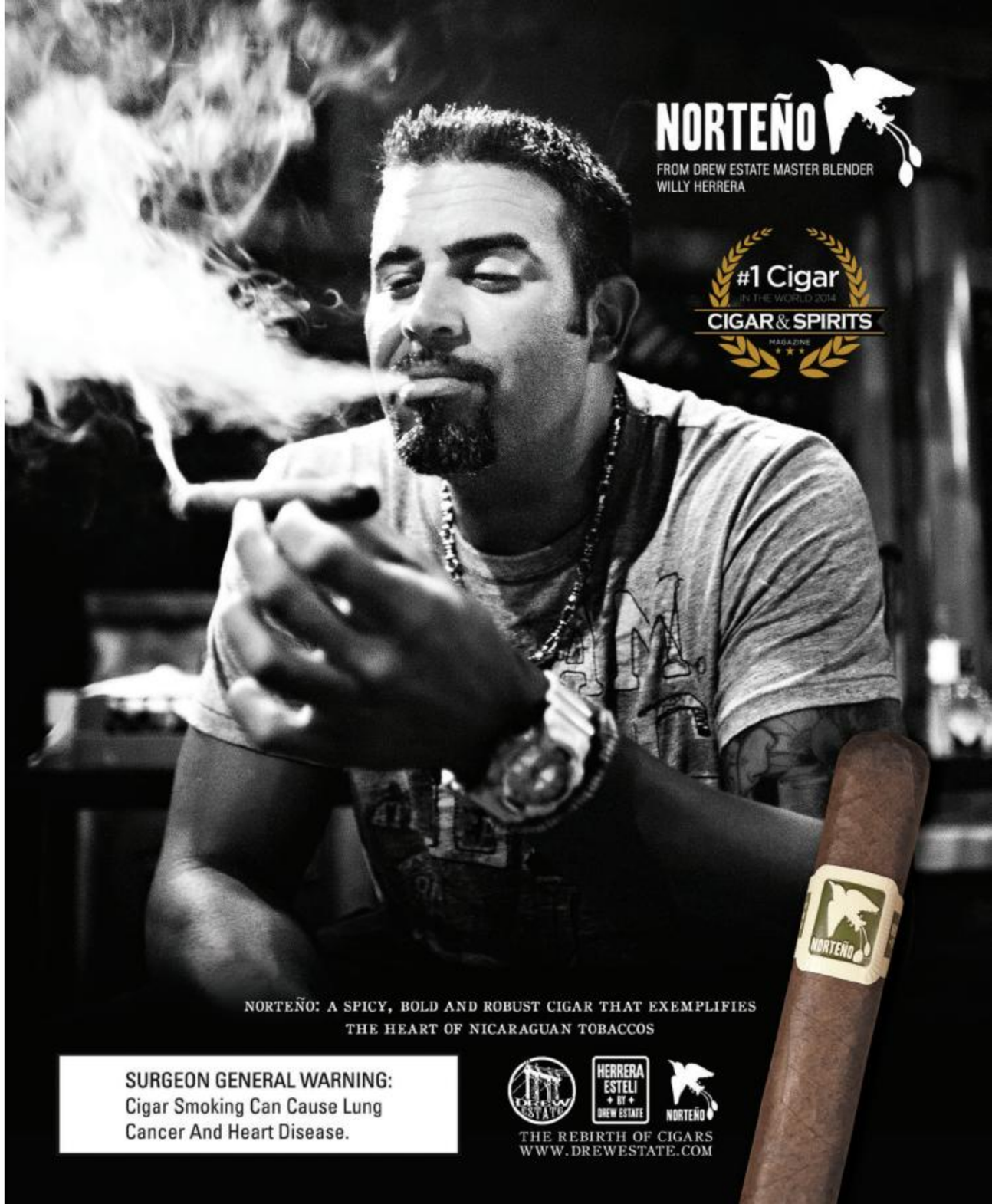
PHOENICIAN
At the base of Camelback Mountain in Scottsdale sits the Five-Diamond Phoenician resort. In addition to guest rooms there are casitas and canyon suites. The Sonoran Desert gets hot fast, but at this resort there are eight pools to choose from to keep you cool, including an edgeless-pool. A beautiful day at the Phoenician is spent playing golf or tennis, checking out the amazing Cactus Garden or exclusive art collection or feeding the Koi in the tranquil Necklace Lake Lagoon. Then enjoy an evening dining at one of the many award winning restaurants or a private dinner for two under the stars at Dinner at tee box eight, the highest point on the resort golf course.

>> Phoenician

>> Arizona Inn

>> Arizona Inn

>> Phoenician



>> El Monte Sagrado

>> Inn of the Five Graces

>> Inn of the Five Graces

>> El Monte Sagrado

New Mexico

EL MONTE SAGRADO

This Four-Diamond resort is not only an oasis; it is a sanctuary. To nurture and mystify guests, the El Monte Sagrado has a creative mix of calming and interesting elements. Waterfalls, lush landscaping, streams filled with fish, and the surrounding desert views of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains help stimulate the senses while relaxing the body. For even more relaxation, decompress at The Living Spa and partake in one of the many organic treatments. Stay and enjoy a full day at the resort or take the opportunity to visit Taos Pueblo, a UNESCO World Heritage site, just a three mile drive from the resort. End the day with a delicious global meal at De La Tierra or sip on a craft cocktail at the fascinating Anaconda Bar. The Anaconda Bar actually has a giant anaconda sculpture that wraps around the bar and up the ceiling as well as an exotic fish aquarium.

THE INN OF FIVE GRACES

This resort may be located in the desert on the oldest inhabited block in the U.S., but it does not fade into the dusty backdrop. Rather, it bursts off the scene with exotic flare from faraway lands. Intricate mosaics and colorful tapestries cover the property, exciting the eye at every turn while the exterior provides balances with the earthy tones of traditional adobe. Kiva fireplaces glow, as the sweet scent of mesquite wafts through the night air. Outside, be transported to another time. Inside, be transported to another world! Five Graces is an Eastern term referring to the five senses, and this resort intends to indulge all of them.

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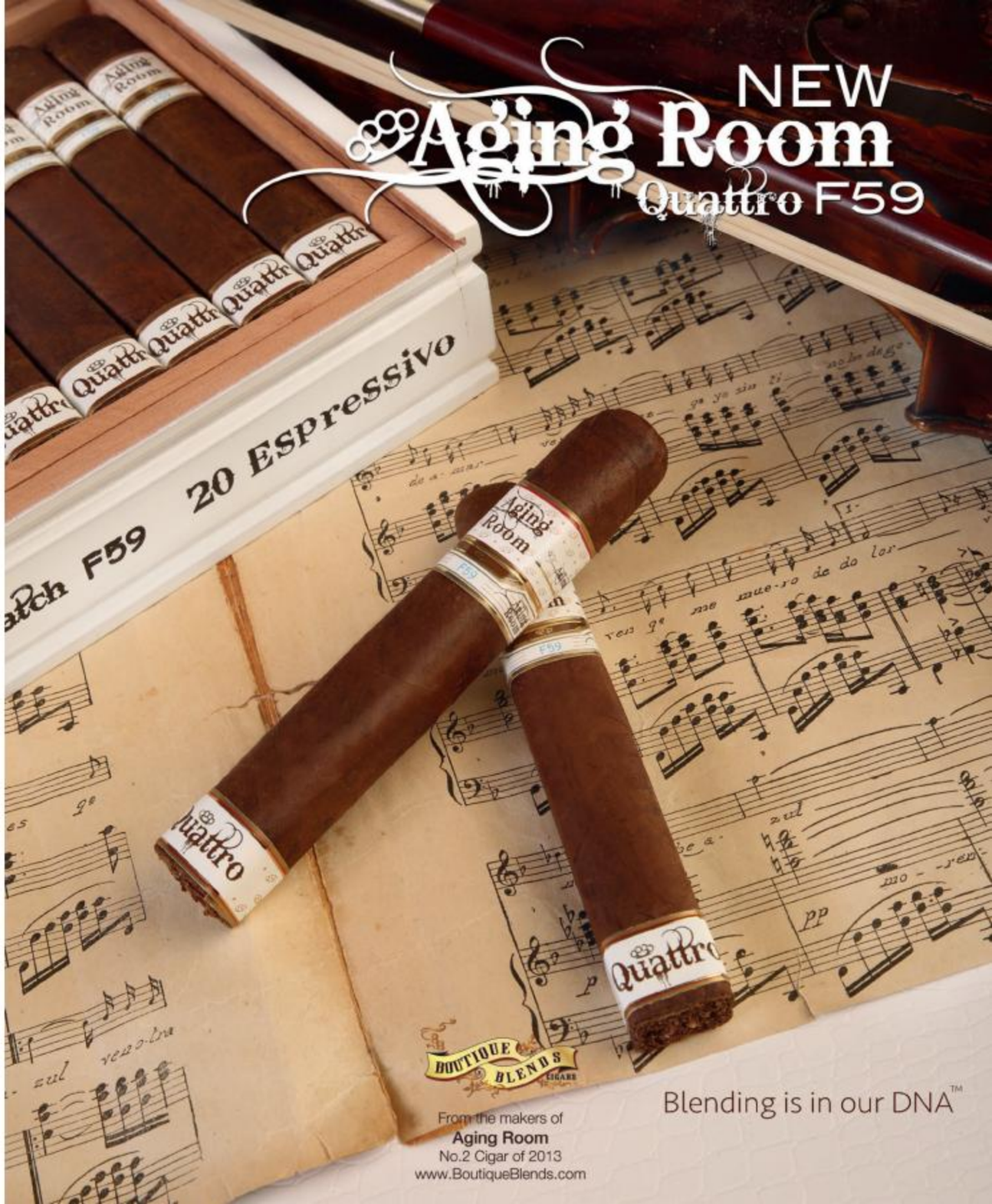
Nevada

MANDARIN ORIENTAL

Las Vegas as a city is an oasis, full of luxury resorts lined up along the strip. It can be hard to say which one is better than the other, but the Mandarin Oriental is the new kid on the block and welcomes the challenge. Excited to grow as an international brand, this resort was excited to make Las Vegas its new home in 2009. Carefully intermixing serenity into the overwhelmingly stimulating town, the Mandarin Oriental focuses on wellness and rejuvenation. Although there is no casino or smoking in this hotel, there are amazing bars, restaurants, a tea room, epic views, and the perfect spa to find your Zen.



>> Sorrel River Ranch

>> Amangiri in Canyon Park

Utah

SORREL RIVER RANCH
The perfect mix of rustic charm and opulent luxury. The Sorrel River Ranch sits along the Sorrel River with the breathtaking backdrop of the mountains. You want adventure? This resort has plenty of options like rock climbing, river-rafting, and horseback riding. Want to be pampered? Head to the spa for a treatment or Sit on deck and take in the amazing desert views.

AMANGIRI IN CANYON PARK
This resort is truly a hideaway in Canyon Park. It literally blends right into the surrounding canyons, only noticed by the warm glow behind its walls and many fire pits. The majestic landscape is the showcase of the Amangiri where the outside infuses with the inside. The canyons even spill into the pools, making for a magnificent sight. Plus, the resort is in the center the Grand Circle, surrounded by natural wonders, such as the Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Zion National Park and Monument Valley. The Amangiri encourages their guests to embrace the outdoors with a number of options for adventure or relaxation. You can even take a morning hot-air balloon ride over the Vermillion Cliffs and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument that launches from the resort.

Who knew the desert could be so revitalizing? The land of extreme elements is calmed with the tranquil environment of these luxurious desert oasis resorts. Upon check in, guests are able to fully enjoy all the beauty and wonder the desert has to offer. Mornings on the golf course, afternoons by the pool or spa, and evenings relaxing by the fire pit with a drink in hand. Don't escape from the desert, escape to the desert at one of these ten amazing resorts.

>> Sorrel River Ranch

>> Amangiri in Canyon Park

Every legend has a beginning.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH THE TALENTED

Kirk Nix

Las Vegas is no stranger to luxury, indulgence and entertainment-and Kirk Nix is no stranger to providing the high-luxe designs to boot. Known for his ability to seamlessly blend masculinity with opulence, it's no wonder why high profile Las Vegas hotels turned to Nix to fulfill their ultimate interior design desires. Having completed multiple projects in the entertainment epicenter of the world, Kirk Nix shares the triumphs he experienced and his favorite ways to indulge while decorating some of the most elite hotels in the notorious Sin City. >>>

By Taryn Paulson

>> From the Venetian

What was your first project in Las Vegas?

Our very first project in Las Vegas was the Palazzo Tower and the subsequent renovation of the Venetian which was a combined total of 6000 guestrooms in 2006. It was intimidating, but alas we rose to the challenge and we were fortunate enough to have an exceptionally supportive client in the Las Vegas Sands group.

Were you excited or intimidated for such a grandiose undertaking?

Are you kidding? It was a spectacular opportunity and we were thrilled to be asked.

What do you do differently when designing for Vegas versus other luxury hotels?

Las Vegas is our national playground. You have a short attention span and it rests entirely upon your shoulders as a designer to capture the spirit and the esoteric of the city amongst 165,000 hotel rooms available. Competition is stiff. We believe it is important to offer the guest something special they cannot find anywhere else.

What was your favorite project in Las Vegas?

My love letter to Las Vegas is the Venezia Tower at the Venetian. It was a 24-month design-build project and what ultimately evolved was, and still is, the most beautiful lobby in town. A tribute to a 19th century Italian villa interpreted in 21st century style.

In the case of Caesar's Palace and The Palazzo you designed the top tier segments, the Villas and the VIP Lounge respectively, how do you approach crafting spaces that reflect the distinction from the larger hotel?

It is essential you capture the DNA of the resort but tailor it to the clientele that demands exclusivity. A higher level of expectation brings out the best in me as the stakes are so much higher. It is critical you understand how this demographic lives, travels and operates so the atmosphere you create is as compelling as humanly possible.

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>> From Caesar's Palace

We all know people go to Vegas to "indulge", does this require sturdier designs/materials to be used?

All hotel rooms are infamous for taking a beating under normal conditions of standard wear and tear. Between Las Vegas and Disney (another client) we have had the chance to develop bulletproof strategies where necessary.

What was the most "out there" element you have incorporated into a Vegas design?

The item that created the most controversy are the gas lanterns in the public areas of the Venezia tower. It required a public hearing to get them past Nevada fire codes. Most of the executives were ready to throw in the towel, but we did persevere and the result is still compelling today.

What advice would you give someone who wanted to create a Vegas style/feel into their home?

At home, I would humbly suggest that you make room to entertain- create gathering places for folks to congregate. Also, music and lighting are key- give them the attention they so richly deserve.

Where is your favorite place to stay when you go to Vegas?

I am currently staying at the newly refurbished Roman tower @ Caesar's Palace KNA Design just completed- I like surrounding myself with good design whenever possible, even if it is my own!

"Las Vegas is our national playground. You have a short attention span and it rests entirely upon your shoulders as a designer to capture the spirit and the esoteric of the city..."

>> From Ceasar's Palace

What is your favorite place to grab a drink in Vegas?

The lobby Bar @ the Mandarin Oriental has the best view in town- a cocktail, a hot date and you can't be beat.

Do you have anything in the works in Vegas now that is being kept under wraps?

There's a new resort on the drawing boards and you'll most certainly expect the unexpected when you arrive at the spaces directed by KNA Design.

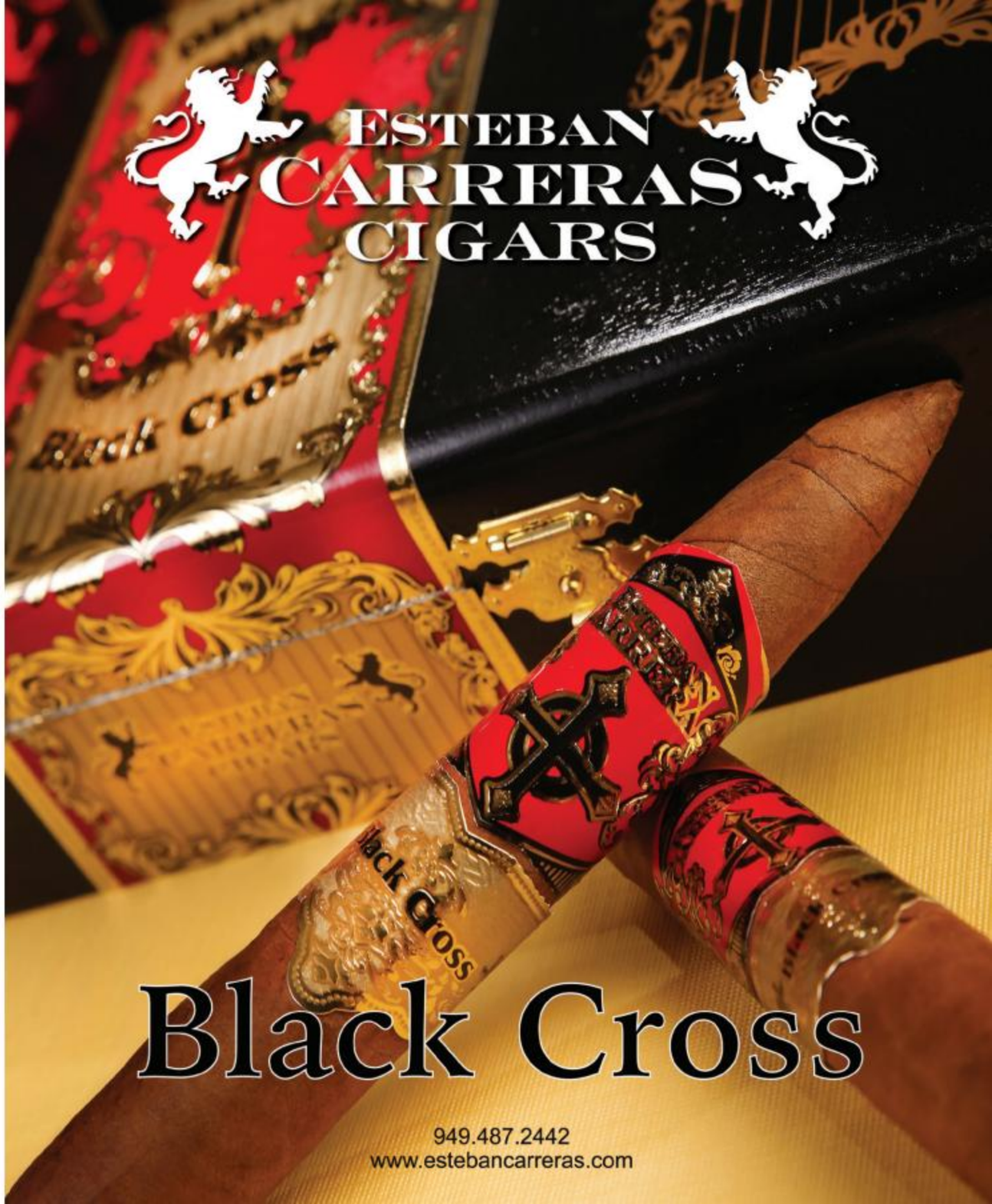
What is your favorite spirit?

Van Winkle straight reserve- Kentucky Bourbon. Neat.

What is your favorite cigar?

Montecristo / Montecristo Churchills Añejados to be precise.

Taryn Paulson is the Public Relations Director for A Design Partnership, which represents Kirk Nix among other luxury and design clients. In her spare time, she enjoys hiking and meditation.



FEATURED CIGARS RATED

102 CIGARS RATED

Ratings are the average based on a blind tasting of each cigar by our expert panel of ten cigar connoisseurs, who together possess more than 100 years of cigar-smoking experience. >>

To provide feedback on any of the ratings, or to offer your own opinions on any of the cigars featured, write us at: feedback@cigarandspirits.com.

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MAYA SELVA CUMPAY NO. 15 OBELISK

5½" X 54

WRAPPER: Habano Jalapa-Nicaragua
BINDER: Esteli, Jalapa-Nicaragua
FILLER: Ometepe, Jalapa-Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES:
Rich woody core surrounded by spicy notes with earthy undertones.

89 Cigar & Spirits RATING

WARPED CIGARS FLOR DE VALLE SKY FLOWER

5 ⅝" x 48

WRAPPER: Nicaraguan Jalapa Corojo 99
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Nicaragua (Corojo 99 & Criollo 98), Medio Tiempo Ligero

TASTING NOTES:
Full-bodied and full strength. Extremely complex with notes including black pepper, lemongrass, dark chocolate, earth and a touch of coffee.

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

IMPERIA BY MIKE BELLODY FUNDADOR

7" x 50/33

WRAPPER: Dominican HVA
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican & Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES:
Medium-bodied and medium-full strength; the Imperia Fundador presents a sweet and savory core with spiced undertones and hints of earth.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

WARPED CIGARS DON REYNALDO REGALOS

5" x 46

WRAPPER: Dominican Corojo
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican/ Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES:
Medium-Plus in strength and body; offering notes of white pepper, dark chocolate and caramel. On the finish, sweet dried fruit and raisins round out the profile.

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

HORACIO JACQUES CHANCEL

Wild Churchill 5.18" x 55

WRAPPER: Ecuador
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Costa Rica - Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES:
Spices, nuts and precious woods.

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

FOUNDATION CIGAR CO. EL GÜEGÜENSE CORONA GORDA

5 ⅝" x 46

WRAPPER: Nicaraguan Creole Corojo 99 (Finca Putalito-Jalapa)
BINDER: Nicaraguan Corojo 99 (San Jose-Jalapa)
FILLER: Nicaraguan Criollo & Corojo (Esteli & Jalapa)

TASTING NOTES:
Exceptionally robust and complex, medium-bodied.

95 Cigar & Spirits RATING

POR LARRAÑAGA PICADORES

5" x 48

WRAPPER: Cuba
BINDER: Cuba
FILLER: Cuba

TASTING NOTES: *Medium bodied and medium strength; hints of green pepper and floral notes surrounded by roasted pine nuts, creamy orange blossom and mixed spices.*

89 Cigar & Spirits RATING

WARPED CIGARS LA COLMENA AMADO NO. 407 LANCERO

7" x 40

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian DesFlorada
BINDER: Ecuador
FILLER: Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES: *Medium strength and medium-bodied; White pepper on the nose, on the palate sweet floral notes, cedar and a twangy creaminess on the finish. Savory and herbal.*

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

BLIND MAN'S BLUFF BY CALDWELL CIGARS ROBUSTO

5" x 50

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Habano
BINDER: Honduran Criollo
FILLER: San Vicente Viso (Dominican Republic), Honduran Criollo "Generoso" Ligero

TASTING NOTES: *Sweet notes of chocolate and molasses dominate this profile and its woody undertones. Medium-bodied.*

90 Cigar & Spirits RATING

HIRAM & SOLOMON THE VEILED PROPHET

7" x 60

WRAPPER: Brazilian Arapiraca 2007
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican

TASTING NOTES: *Masterful workmanship; a very complex blend with ample wood notes and sweet aromas. Creamy smoke gives way to a lovely cedar and leather finish. Exceptionally balanced.*

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

NEYA F8 BY ROBERTO DURAN ROBUSTO

5" x 52

WRAPPER: Habano Ecuador
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES: *Spice and cedar, full bodied and full flavored*

88 Cigar & Spirits RATING

DURAN SIGNATURE BY ROBERTO DURAN ROBUSTO

5 x 52

WRAPPER: Ecuador Habano Criollo
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Nicaragua and other Latin American tobaccos

TASTING NOTES: *Medium bodied, smooth, and complex. Features notes of cream and white chocolate.*

90 Cigar & Spirits RATING

AJ FERNANDEZ ENCLAVE ROBUSTO

5" x 52

WRAPPER: Ecuador Habano Rosado
BINDER: Cameroon
FILLER: AJF Select Nicaraguan Filler and AJF Nicaraguan Piloto Cubano

TASTING NOTES: *Notes of fresh hay, oak, and walnut surrounded by spicy cedar. Medium-bodied.*

88 Cigar & Spirits RATING

HIRAM & SOLOMON MASTER MASON GRAND TORO

6" x 56

WRAPPER: Maduro
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican

TASTING NOTES: *Full bodied cigar with a tightly packed body under a dark, velvety wrapper. Notes of sweet leather, cocoa, and a very pronounced cedar aroma.*

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

HIRAM & SOLOMON EARNED APPRENTICE GRAND TORO

6" x 56

WRAPPER: Connecticut
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican

TASTING NOTES: *This mild to medium strength blend produces a creamy, silky smoke with subtle sweet notes and hints of white pepper. Tremendous smoke production.*

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

AZAN MADURO BY ROBERTO DURAN TORO DE LUXE

6 ½" x 56

WRAPPER: Ecuador Corojo Maduro
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Jalapa, Nicaragua and other Latin American tobaccos

TASTING NOTES: *Medium-full bodied with notes of rich cocoa and brewed coffee.*

89 Cigar & Spirits RATING

SOUTHERN DRAW KUDZU AXIL LANCERO

6.5" x 40

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Habano Oscuro
BINDER: Ometepe, Nicaragua
FILLER: Proprietary 3 Varietal, Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES: *Medium-plus body with hints of cinnamon and nutmeg. Oily on the palate and pepper on the nose. Great burn.*

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

SOUTHERN DRAW FIRETHORN POME LANCERO

6.5" x 40

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Habano Rosado
BINDER: Mexican
FILLER: Proprietary 3 Varietal, Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES: *Medium-bodied and strength. Creamy and buttery with a soft leather finish.*

88 Cigar & Spirits RATING

SOUTHERN DRAW QUICKDRAW CONNECTICUT

Petite Corona 4.5" x 44

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Connecticut
BINDER: Ometepe, Nicaragua
FILLER: Proprietary Nicaraguan Blend

TASTING NOTES: *Mild-medium bodied and strength cigar that features soft pepper on the nose and sweet notes of citrus, honey, and cedar finish.*

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

CUSANO CONNECTICUT BY DAVIDOFF

Toro 6" x 50

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Connecticut
BINDER: Ecuadorian Connecticut
FILLER: Dominican Republic

TASTING NOTES: *Creamy and smooth, the Cusano Connecticut is mild medium bodied and refined with hints of pepper, spice and cedar with a soft and sweet creamy finish.*

90 Cigar & Spirits RATING

CUSANO MADURO BY DAVIDOFF

Toro 6" x 50

WRAPPER: Mexican San Andres Negro
BINDER: Ecuador Connecticut
FILLER: Dominican Republic

TASTING NOTES: *A rich and spicy cigar with notes of coffee, chocolate, and a soft cedary finish. Medium full in body.*

89 Cigar & Spirits RATING

CAMACHO AMERICAN BARREL AGED

Toro 6 x 50

WRAPPER: Broadleaf
BINDER: Broadleaf
FILLER: Pennsylvania Corojo

TASTING NOTES: *Bold and aromatic, the American Barrel Aged is a medium full bodied cigar with full notes of spice, pepper, and subtle hints of vanilla and bourbon.*

90 Cigar & Spirits RATING

FALTO BALLIBO EDICÍON ESPECIAL

Corona 5 ¼" x 43

WRAPPER: Nicaragua
BINDER: Indonesia
FILLER: Dominican Republic and Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES: *Rich in flavor with a medium complexity and body. The Ballibo features notes of wood, nutmeg and cinnamon.*

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

FALTO EL PRÓCER

6" x 48

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Corojo Shade
BINDER: Brazilian Sumatra
FILLER: Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Brazil

TASTING NOTES: *Medium to full-bodied. Woody notes and roasted nuts. Rich in complexity with spices and very full flavors.*

90 Cigar & Spirits RATING

FALTO YAGÜEZ ARAWACO

5" x 54

WRAPPER: Habana 2000 Dominican Republic
BINDER: Cameroon
FILLER: Dominican Republic

TASTING NOTES: *Full bodied and flavored. Great complexity with touches of molasses and rich and balanced spices.*

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

PADRÓN DAMASO

Belicoso 6" x 52

WRAPPER: Connecticut
BINDER: Nicaraguan
FILLER: Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES: *Smooth and nuanced, mild in body and medium strength the Damaso is surrounded by cocoa, caramel, and cedar. The profile is accentuated by hints of pepper delivered on a bed of creamy smoke.*

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

AJ FERNANDEZ NEW WORLD ALMIRANTE

Belicoso 5 ½" x 55

WRAPPER: Dark Nicaraguan
BINDER: Jalapa
FILLER: Blend of Ometepe, Condega & Estelí

TASTING NOTES: *Medium to full-bodied with rich and spicy notes. The finish is smooth with hints of sweetness.*

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

THE ROMEO BY ROMEO Y JULIETA AGING ROOM

Capriccio 6 x 54

WRAPPER: Habano Dominicano
BINDER: Habano Dominicano
FILLER: Habano Dominicano

TASTING NOTES: *Medium to full-bodied, rich and savory with subtle and complex nuances of flavor.*

#1 CIGAR OF 2015

HENRY CLAY

Toro 6 x 50

WRAPPER: Connecticut Broadleaf Maduro
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican

TASTING NOTES: *Smooth, full-bodied flavor with a rich aroma.*

95 Cigar & Spirits RATING

MONTECRISTO VINTAGE CONNECTICUT NO. 3

Corona 5 ½" x 44

WRAPPER: 2008 Vintage Connecticut Shade
BINDER: Nicaraguan
FILLER: Dominican, Nicaraguan, Peruvian

TASTING NOTES: *Subtle and rich flavors are prominent in this sophisticated smoke, creamy and buttery smooth on the finish. Rich, flavorful and complex.*

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

SAN LOTANO HABANO

Robusto 5 ½" x 54

WRAPPER: Brazilian Habano
BINDER: Nicaraguan
FILLER: Nicaraguan, Honduran and Dominican

TASTING NOTES: *Rich and robust with earthy notes that converge in a medium bodied smoking experience.*

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

ALEC BRADLEY COYOL

Belicoso 5 ½" x 58

WRAPPER: Honduran
BINDER: Honduran
FILLER: Honduran, Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES: *Fantastic aroma and flavor with robust flavor characteristics. Luxurious and chewy medium bodied smoke.*

90 Cigar & Spirits RATING

ESPADA BY MONTECRISTO

Guard 6 x 50

WRAPPER: Habano Jalapa Vintage 2010
BINDER: Habano Jalapa Vintage 2009
FILLER: Habano Jalapa Seco Vintage 2008, Habano Jalapa Viso Ometepe Vintage 2008, Habano Condega Ligero Vintage 2008

TASTING NOTES: *Rich, complex, and deeply satisfying. Medium to full-bodied.*

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

VILLIGER SAN D'ORO COLORADO

6" x 50 Toro

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Habano
BINDER: Nicaragua Habano
FILLER: Nicaragua Habano

TASTING NOTES: *Rich and balanced flavor. Medium bodied with hints of pepper on the nose.*

90 Cigar & Spirits RATING

PADRON FAMILY RESERVE 50 YEARS

5" x 54

WRAPPER: Natural Nicaraguan
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES: *Medium to full-bodied; notes of chocolate, coffee, earth and hints of cinnamon on the finish.*

96 Cigar & Spirits RATING

PDR CIGARS A CROP OSCURO

Gordo 6" x 58

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Maduro
BINDER: Dominican Olor
FILLER: Dominican and Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES: *Medium to full-bodied with big and rich flavors.*

94 Cigar & Spirits RATING

MY FATHER LA ANTIGUEDAD

5 ¼" x 52

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Habano
BINDER: Nicaraguan
FILLER: Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES: *Medium to full-bodied; hints of coffee, milk chocolate and black pepper with an earthy finish.*

88 Cigar & Spirits RATING

HIDDEN TREASURE SERIE 60

6" x 60

WRAPPER: Connecticut
BINDER: Habano
FILLER: Piloto Cubano Ligero, Criollo '98 Ligero, Viso and Seco

TASTING NOTES: *Chewy and creamy texture with medium spicy tones throughout.*

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

PANCHO VILLA

Churchill 7" x 50

WRAPPER: San Andrés Maduro
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican and Cuban seed Ligeros, Viso, and Seco

TASTING NOTES: *Mild to medium; hints of cocoa, light pepper with an earthy finish.*

88 Cigar & Spirits RATING

GURKHA 125TH ANNIVERSARY

6" x 54

WRAPPER: Brazilian Cubra
BINDER: Ecuadorian Habano
FILLER: Nicaraguan, Brazilian, Dominican

TASTING NOTES: *Medium to full-bodied; relatively sweet with notes of cedar and leather with a nutty finish.*

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

DREW ESTATE UNDERCROWN SHADE

Corona Doble 7" x 54

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Connecticut
BINDER: Sumatran
FILLER: Dominican Criollo '98, Nicaraguan Criollo, Corojo

TASTING NOTES: *Medium-bodied; lush and ultra-smooth.*

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

BALMORAL CIGARS ANEJO XO ROTHSCHILD MASIVO ROBUSTO

5" x 55

WRAPPER: Sungrown Arapiraca
BINDER: Dominican Olor
FILLER: Dominican, Nicaraguan, Brazilian

TASTING NOTES: *Full-bodied; cedar, cocoa, spices and underlying sweetness.*

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

LA PALINA FAMILY SERIES

Robusto 5 ¼" x 50

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Corojo '98
BINDER: Ecuadorian Habano
FILLER: Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES: *Medium; notes of cedar, caramel, nuts and coffee with a spicy mocha finish.*

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

OLIVA SERIE V MELANIO

Figurado 6 ½" x 52

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian
BINDER: Nicaraguan
FILLER: Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES: *Rich notes of leather supplemented by a range of coffee, caramel, and woody intonations.*

95 Cigar & Spirits RATING

ESTEBAN CARRERAS BLACK CROSS

Corona 6" x 44

WRAPPER: Habano Cafe
BINDER: Nicaraguan
FILLER: Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES: *Smooth mix of heavy cream and cocoa with a hint of spice.*

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

BOUTIQUE BLENDS LA BOHEME ENCANTADOR FENICE

Torpedo 6" x 52

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Habano
BINDER: Habano Dominicano
FILLER: Habano Dominicano

TASTING NOTES: *Strong and earthy, with notes of sweet, dry fruit and hints of hickory, pepper, and oak.*

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

MONTECRISTO NO. 2

Torpedo 6" x 52

WRAPPER: Cuban
BINDER: Cuban
FILLER: Cuban

TASTING NOTES: *Mild-medium in strength and body with soft floral notes surrounded by creamy vanilla and toasted cedar.*

95 Cigar & Spirits RATING

BOLIVAR ROYAL CORONA

4 7/8" x 50

WRAPPER: Cuban
BINDER: Cuban
FILLER: Cuban

TASTING NOTES: *Medium to full-bodied; spicy with notes of leather and chocolate.*

94 Cigar & Spirits RATING

VEGAS ROBAINA UNICOS

6.1" x 52

WRAPPER: Cuban
BINDER: Cuban
FILLER: Cuban

TASTING NOTES:
Medium to full-bodied; hints of sweetness, wood and earth.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

SINDICATO MADURO

Toro 6 x 54

WRAPPER: San Andrés
BINDER: Double binder, Estelí Nicaragua
FILLER: Estelí and Jalapa, Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES:
Bold and rich cocoa flavors, earthy and with a medium-full strength.

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

AFR PINAR DEL RIO 75 SUBLIME

5" x 56

WRAPPER: San Andrés Maduro
BINDER: Nicaraguan Criollo '98
FILLER: Nicaraguan, Dominican, Connecticut Broadleaf

TASTING NOTES:
Full-bodied with a rich profile full of roasted coffee beans, cocoa, and subtle spice on the finish.

94 Cigar & Spirits RATING

ROCKY PATEL SUPER LIGERO

Robusto 5" x 50

WRAPPER: Honduran
BINDER: Nicaraguan
FILLER: Costa Rican, Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES:
Robust and full-bodied; begins with a blast of bold flavor and a slight woodiness. Lingering spice with hints of cinnamon and white pepper. Hearty finish with a sweet aftertaste.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

PADRÓN 1926 SERIE NO. 2

5 ½" x 52

WRAPPER: Nicaraguan
BINDER: Nicaraguan
FILLER: Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES:
Exceptionally smooth, complex, balanced and full-bodied.

95 Cigar & Spirits RATING

PADRÓN 1964 ANNIVERSARY

Torpedo 6" x 52

WRAPPER: Nicaraguan
BINDER: Nicaraguan
FILLER: Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES:
Smooth, rich and complex.

94 Cigar & Spirits RATING

NAT SHERMAN TIMELESS 749

7" x 49

WRAPPER: Nicaraguan
BINDER: Nicaraguan
FILLER: Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES:
Medium-bodied, creamy and rich, with flavors of coffee, cocoa and chocolate, plus a touch of earthiness and a light spice.

94 Cigar & Spirits RATING

TIMELESS ESPECIALES

6" x 38

WRAPPER: Honduran
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Nicaraguan, Dominican

TASTING NOTES:
Medium-bodied with full flavors of rich espresso and roasted nuts, earthiness and a subtly sweet finish.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

LA PALINA MR. SAM

Toro 6" x 50

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian
BINDER: Nicaraguan
FILLER: Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES:
Medium to full-bodied; spicy and rich with a cocoa finish

90 Cigar & Spirits RATING

LA PALINA BLACK LABEL

Toro 6" x 50

WRAPPER: Brazilian
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican

TASTING NOTES:
Full-bodied with spicy undertones, fruit and cocoa on the finish.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

LA AURORA CIEN AÑOS

Lancero 7 ½" x 40

WRAPPER: Dominican Corojo
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican

TASTING NOTES:
Espresso, earth, cedar, molasses and herbal finish.

94 Cigar & Spirits RATING

JC NEWMAN DIAMOND CROWN MAXIMUS

Double Robusto #6 5" x 56

WRAPPER: Sungrown Ecuadorian El Bajo
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican

TASTING NOTES:
Full-bodied yet smooth; sweet with mocha, hints of oaks and soft spices.

96 Cigar & Spirits RATING

YEARS *of* AGING *and* EXPERT BLENDING
COME TO LIFE WITH NOTES *of* RICH VANILLA,
DRIED FRUITS *and* SPICE.

A RUM WELL WORTH PURSUING.

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DIAMOND CROWN JULIUS CAESAR PYRAMID

6 ½" x 52

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian
BINDER: 5-year aged Dominican
FILLER: 5-year aged Dominican

TASTING NOTES:
Mild to medium-bodied; flavors of nuts and wood with subtle hints of cocoa and spice.

95 Cigar & Spirits RATING

GURKHA CELLAR RESERVE EDICION ESPECIAL HEDONISM

6" x 58

WRAPPER: Corojo
BINDER: 18-year aged Dominican
FILLER: 18-year aged Dominican

TASTING NOTES:
Medium bodied, full-flavor and full strength with smooth rich flavors.

96 Cigar & Spirits RATING

PUNCH SIGNATURE ROBUSTO

5" x 54

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Corojo
BINDER: USA/Connecticut Habano
FILLER: Dominican/ Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES:
Balanced flavors with hints of cocoa and spice.

88 Cigar & Spirits RATING

COHIBA NICARAGUA N54 ROBUSTO EXTRA

5 ½" x 54

WRAPPER: Colorado Oscuro
BINDER: Nicaraguan
FILLER: Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES:
A rich and creamy smoke; peppered with bold notes of spice and touches of sweetness.

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

DREW ESTATE NORTEÑO ROBUSTO GRANDE

5 ½" x 54

WRAPPER: San Andrés Maduro
BINDER: Honduras
FILLER: Nicaragua (Jalapa and Estelí)

TASTING NOTES:
Spicy, rich and bold.

96 Cigar & Spirits RATING

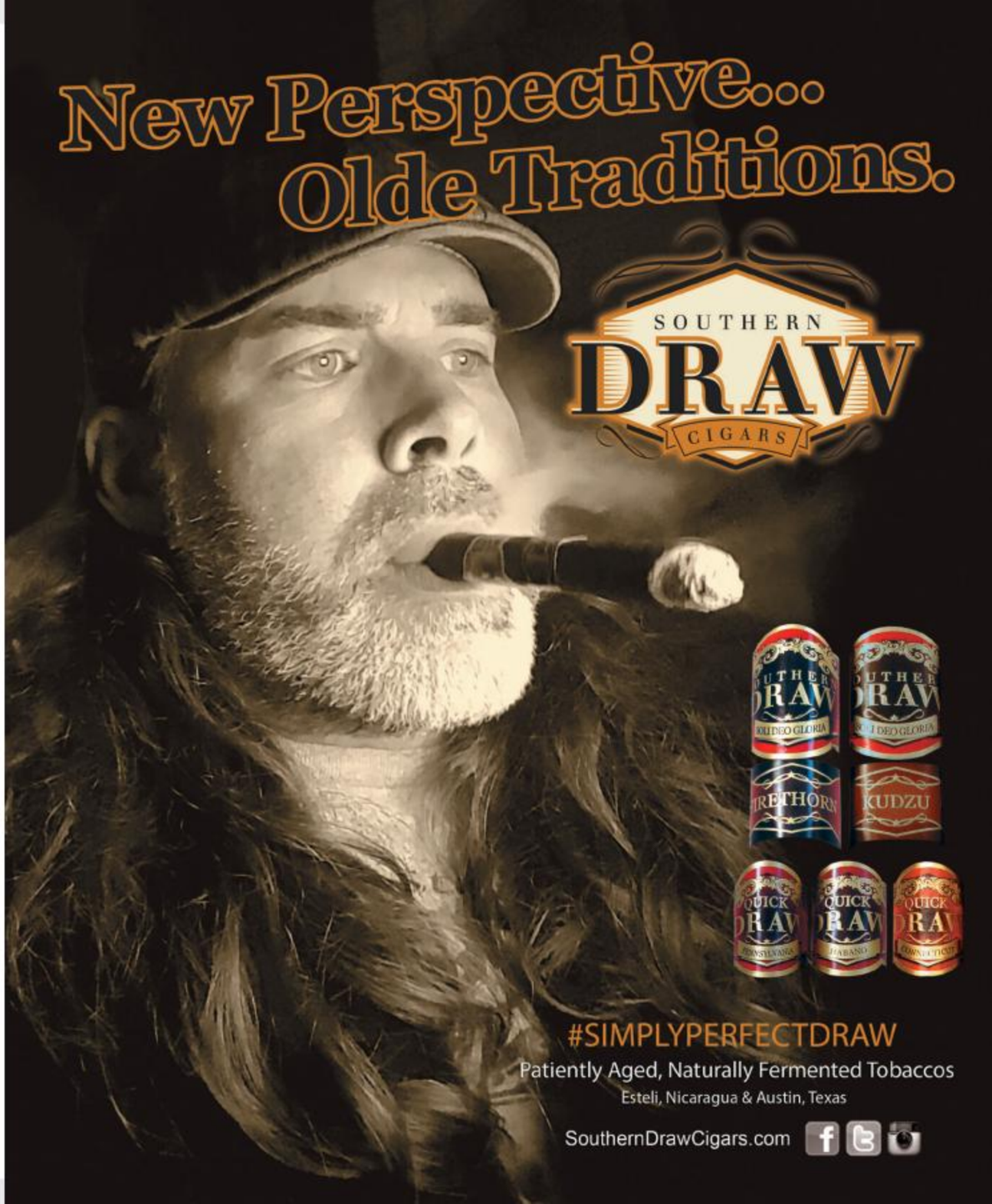
DREW ESTATE LIGA PRIVADA NO. 9 BELICOSO

6" x 52

WRAPPER: Connecticut Broadleaf Ligero Oscuro
BINDER: Brazilian Mata Fina
FILLER: Nicaragua and Honduras

TASTING NOTES:
Medium to full-bodied, lush, earthy and espresso like finish.

95 Cigar & Spirits RATING



ESTEBAN CARRERAS CHUPA CABRA

6" x 50

WRAPPER: Habano Oscuro
BINDER: Nicaraguan
FILLER: Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES:
Medium bodied with a heady essence of rich earthy flavors. Notes of coffee and sweetness are present in the creamy finish.

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

ESTEBAN CARRERAS COVENANT

6" x 54

WRAPPER: Habano Oscuro
BINDER: Ometepe Nicaragua
FILLER: Ometepe Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES:
Medium-bodied with complex flavors of fruit and spice, complimented by the smooth and silky rich finish.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

ESTEBAN CARRERAS COVENANT MADURO

6 ¼" x 54

WRAPPER: Habano Maduro
BINDER: ESTELI, OMETEPE, JALAPA
FILLER: Esteli, Ometepe, Jalapa

TASTING NOTES:
Rich and creamy with fruit notes complimenting rich spice and cocoa flavors.

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

ARTURO FUENTE AÑEJO RESERVA 48

7" x 48

WRAPPER: 5-year-old Connecticut Maduro
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican

TASTING NOTES:
A rich and spicy, slightly sweet smoke that leaves a distinctive finish.

95 Cigar & Spirits RATING

BOUTIQUE BLENDS AGING ROOM BIN NO. 1 B MINOR ROBUSTO

6.125" x 52

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Habano
BINDER: Habano Dominicano
FILLER: Habano Dominicano

TASTING NOTES:
Full-bodied, full of hickory and nougat notes complimented by subtle hints of cocoa and brown sugar.

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

BOUTIQUE BLENDS AGING ROOM M356II RONDO ROBUSTO

5" x 50

WRAPPER: Habano
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican

TASTING NOTES:
Full bodied with earthy notes and touches of black pepper.

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

DAVIDOFF PURO D'ORO MAGNIFICOS

5 ½" x 52

WRAPPER: Dominican
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican

TASTING NOTES:
Medium-bodied with heady aromas of espresso, chocolate and nuts, with some earthy notes of pepper and spice.

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

DAVIDOFF MILLENIUM BLEND

5 ¼" x 50

WRAPPER: Sun-grown Ecuadorian
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican

TASTING NOTES:
Full-bodied, rich and complex, with chocolaty notes and bold, full flavor due to a higher percentage of Piloto tobacco.

94 Cigar & Spirits RATING

DAVIDOFF NICARAGUA ROBUSTO

5" x 50

WRAPPER: 10-year-old Nicaraguan Rosado
BINDER: Habano Jalapa
FILLER: Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES:
Medium-bodied with pepper notes, spicy aromas alongside woody and earthy flavors that finish milder and sweeter.

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

CRUX NINFAMANIAC

7 x 33 Double Perfecto

WRAPPER: Habano Jalapa
BINDER: Indonesia
FILLER: Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES:
Medium bodied, medium strength with a semi sweet cocoa core surrounded by hints of nutmeg.

88 Cigar & Spirits RATING

CRUX DU CONNOISSEUR NO. 2

6 ½ x 38 Lancero

WRAPPER: Habano Jalapa
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Honduras

TASTING NOTES:
Medium-plus bodied, medium-plus strength. Profile is creamy and buttery with floral notes.

89 Cigar & Spirits RATING

CRUX CLASSIC TORO MARBLEHEAD

6 x 52 Toro Marblehead

WRAPPER: Habano Jalapa
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES:
Medium bodied and medium strength. Profile exudes light caramel sweetness and hints of spice.

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

DAVIDOFF WINSTON CHURCHILL LIMITED EDITION 2016 THE RACONTEUR

6 x 56 Gran Toro

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Habano 2000
BINDER: Mexican San Andrés Negro
FILLER: Dominican Republic & Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES:
Just shy of Full strength, The Raconteur offers an instant creaminess followed by pepper, roasted nuts, oak wood, and hints of leather.

94 Cigar & Spirits RATING

DAVIDOFF YEAR OF THE MONKEY

6 ½ x 50 Toro

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Habano
BINDER: Mexican San Andrés Negro
FILLER: Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Peru

TASTING NOTES:
Medium Full bodied, and full minus strength featuring a flavor core of creamy oak and milk chocolate. Rounding out the profile are hints of peanut, cinnamon, roasted coffee beans and dark cocoa.

94 Cigar & Spirits RATING

AVO 90TH CLASSIC COVERS VOLUME 3

6 x 54 Toro

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Habano 2000
BINDER: Mexican Negro San Andrés
FILLER: San Vicente Mejorado Visus (DR), Piloto Seco (DR), Hybrid Corojo/ Olor Visus (DR)-Aged 10 years, Criollo Seco (DR)-Aged 11 years.

TASTING NOTES:
Medium in body and strength, the AVO 90th showcases notes of earth, cedar, spice and hints of citrus.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

ESTEBAN CARRERAS 10 AÑOS

6 x 52 Toro

WRAPPER: Nicaraguan-Aged 10 Years
BINDER: Nicaraguan
FILLER: Nicaraguan

TASTING NOTES:
Lightly box pressed and medium-full bodied and strength, the flavor profile is a core of rich cocoa with hints of sweet earth.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

FABLE CIGAR FOURTH PRIME

5 ¼ x 56 Robusto Extra

WRAPPER: Pennsylvania Broadleaf
BINDER: Ecuador Habano Ligero
FILLER: Nicaragua/ Dominican Republic

TASTING NOTES:
Dominated by sweeter elements, the flavor profile is highlighted by a core of chocolate, sweet spices and peppers with hints of coffee, espresso, and cinnamon. Medium-full in body and strength.

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

PUNCH RARE COROJO REGALIAS PERFECTO

7 ½ x 54 Perfecto

WRAPPER: Ecuador
BINDER: Connecticut Broadleaf
FILLER: Nicaragua, Honduras, Dominican Republic

TASTING NOTES:
Medium in body and strength, the Rare Corojo offers a complex profile that is spicy yet smooth.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

PASSION THROUGH THE YEARS

For nearly 140 years, cigar smokers have enjoyed a passionate love affair with Romeo y Julieta cigars.

Building on the success of Romeo by Romeo y Julieta, the new Anejo features a ***stalk-cut*** dark Connecticut Broadleaf wrapper, complimented by ***double fermented*** 2008 ***vintage tobaccos.***

Anejo is a rich and robust cigar with undernotes of dark chocolate and coffee for a memorable smoke

Romeo Añejo by Romeo y Julieta. A passion though the years.

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HOYO ROBUSTO

5 x 54 Robusto

WRAPPER: Nicaragua (Estelí) Habano Shade
BINDER: Ecuador
FILLER: Nicaragua (Estelí, Ometepe), Pennsylvania Ligero

TASTING NOTES:
Medium Full with deep rich flavors and peppery undertones.

89 Cigar & Spirits RATING

BOLIVAR 660

6 x 60 Gran Toro

WRAPPER: USA Habano Connecticut Grown
BINDER: Ecuador
FILLER: Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, Dominican Republic

TASTING NOTES:
Bold and full-flavored across the palate. The Bolivar 660 is full bodied and medium-full in strength with a woodsy core hints of cocoa.

88 Cigar & Spirits RATING

H. UPMANN YARGÜERA

6 x 54 Toro

WRAPPER: Yargüera '13 Tapado (Shade)
BINDER: Criollo '98
FILLER: Sungrown Yargüera '13 and Criollo '98

TASTING NOTES:
Medium bodied and Medium in strength the Yargüera offers a woody and earth core surrounded by hints of spice.

88 Cigar & Spirits RATING

QUESADA RESERVA PRIVADA

6 ½ x 56 Toro Gordo

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Connecticut
BINDER: Dominican San Vicente '97 Vintage
FILLER: Dominican San Vicente '97 Vintage from Cosecha Pareja crops, Pennsylvania Ligero

TASTING NOTES:
Medium-full strength and medium bodied, the Reserva Privada is creamy at its core with hints of subtle spice, cedar, and dried floral notes.

88 Cigar & Spirits RATING

ROCKY PATEL TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

5 x 54 Robusto Grande

WRAPPER: Honduras
BINDER: Trade Secret
FILLER: Nicaragua (Esteli, Jalapa) Jamastran, Honduras

TASTING NOTES:
Full bodied and full strength, the Twentieth Anniversary is rich and decadent with hints of chocolate, cedar, nuts and earth.

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

ROCKY PATEL PRIVATE CELLAR

6 x 52

WRAPPER: Connecticut Broadleaf
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES:
Medium-Full bodied with a rich and dense smoke that carries a sweet profile of dark chocolate, espresso beans and a hint of earthiness.

90 Cigar & Spirits RATING

XEN BY NISH PATEL

5 x 50 Robusto

WRAPPER: Ecuador (Connecticut Seed)
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Trade Secret

TASTING NOTES:
Medium bodied and slightly below medium in strength, the XEN by Nish Patel offers zesty flavors with a rich spiciness that is reminiscent of a dry hopped IPA.

89 Cigar & Spirits RATING

SOBREMESA EL AMERICANO BY DUNBARTON TOBACCO & TRUST

6 x 52 Toro

WRAPPER: La Mec Ecuador Habano Grade 1 Dark Rosado
BINDER: Matacapan Negro de Temporal
FILLER: Nicaraguan GK Condega C-SG Seco, Nicaraguan Pueblo Nuevo Criollo Viso, Nicaraguan La Joya de Esteli C-98 Viso, Nicaraguan ASP Esteli Hybrid Ligero, USA Lancaster County Broadleaf Lifgero

TASTING NOTES:
Medium-Full in body and strength, this liga is creamy to the core with an abundance of cocoa, cedar, brewed coffee with hints of pepper on the retrohale.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

NAT CICCO ANIVERSARIO 1963

5 ½ x 56 Robusto Grande

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Habano
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES:
Full Bodied.

89 Cigar & Spirits RATING

NAT CICCO HHB CLASSIC

6 ¾ x 58 Toro

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Connecticut
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Dominican Republic, Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES:
Medium Bodied.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

NAT CICCO HHB GOLD

6 ¾ x 58 Toro

WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Habano
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Dominican Republic, Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES:
Medium-Full Bodied

89 Cigar & Spirits RATING

ARTURO FUENTE FLOR FINA 8-5-8 SUN GROWN

6 ¼" x 47

WRAPPER: Sun-grown Ecuadorian
BINDER: Dominican
FILLER: Dominican

TASTING NOTES:
Full-bodied and rich with notes of chocolate, cinnamon and pepper spice with an earthy finish.

90 Cigar & Spirits RATING

EXPERIENCE THE SPIRIT OF THE VALLEY

Its vintage 2008 Connecticut Shade Wrapper, nurtured on Montecristo's company farms in the Connecticut River Valley USA, is prized for its silky texture and delicate taste.

Creamy smoothness, rich aroma and complex flavor sensations

MONTECRISTO
WHITE SERIES
Vintage CONNECTICUT™

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ARTURO FUENTE DON CARLOS PRESIDENTE

6 ½ x 52 Churchill

WRAPPER: Cameroon
BINDER: Dominican Republic
FILLER: Dominican Republic

TASTING NOTES:
Medium bodied and medium strength, the Don Carlos is balanced across the palate with a zesty flavor core featuring hints of spice, almonds, and citrus.

90 Cigar & Spirits RATING

FUENTE FUENTE OPUS X ANGEL'S SHARE

5 5/8 x 46 Fuente Fuente

WRAPPER: Dominican Chateau de la Fuente Sun Grown
BINDER: Dominican Republic
FILLER: Dominican Republic

TASTING NOTES:
Medium Bodied, and Medium-Full in strength with a rich complexity of flavor. Buttery and creamy on the palate with notes of cedar, earth and cinnamon surrounded by hints of raisin, and sweet roasted nuts.

94 Cigar & Spirits RATING

FUENTE FUENTE OPUS X PERFECXION X

6 ¼ x 48 Perfecxion X

WRAPPER: Dominican Chateau de la Fuente Sun Grown Rosado
BINDER: Dominican Republic
FILLER: Dominican Republic

TASTING NOTES:
Medium to full bodied, the Perfecxion X featured a well rounded profile of spice and leather with hints of espresso and oak.

97 Cigar & Spirits RATING

CORNELIUS & ANTHONY CORNELIUS CORONA GORDA

5 ½" x 46

WRAPPER: Ecuador
BINDER: Ecuador
FILLER: Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES:
Layered complexity with notes of both sweetness and spice. A refined and balanced blend that culminates in a buttery smooth finish.

94 Cigar & Spirits RATING

CORNELIUS & ANTHONY DADDY MAC CORONA GORDA

5.5" x 46

WRAPPER: Brazil
BINDER: Ecuador
FILLER: Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES:
Medium-to-full bodied, features notes of sweetness and spice that dance on the palate. Superior balance of flavor.

93 Cigar & Spirits RATING

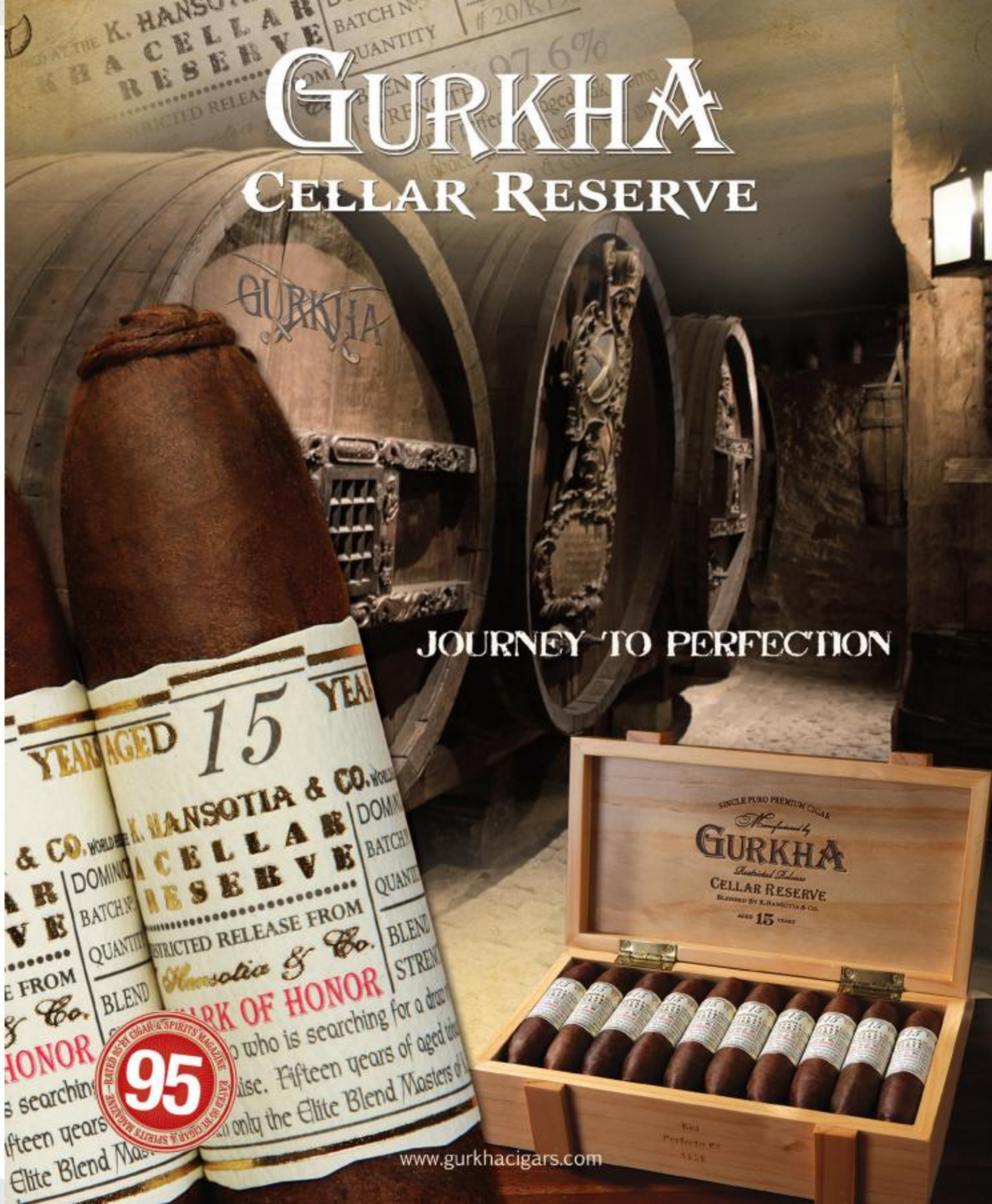
TATUAJE COJONU 2006

5½" x 52 Belicoso

WRAPPER: Nicaragua
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Nicaragua

TASTING NOTES:
Flavorful medium bodied, medium-strength with rich notes of earth, cocoa, cedar and some spice on the nose.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING



CIGAR & SPIRITS REVEALS

THE TASTING PANEL

THERE EXISTS A GROUP OF MEN WHOM ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THE RATINGS THAT COME FROM CIGAR & SPIRITS MAGAZINE. THE 10 MEN WHO COMPRISE THIS PANEL ALL HAIL FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS, YET POSSESS A SINGLE OVERARCHING SIMILARITY - THEIR LOVE AND APPRECIATION OF PREMIUM CIGARS.

The Cigar & Spirits Tasting panel isn't a new concept; in fact, the tasting panel itself has a strict process that is followed for each cigar that is rated by *Cigar & Spirits Magazine* - a process which is steeped in the traditions that our industry has come to expect over the years.

First off, every cigar that is received for review is un-banded and then affixed with a plain numbered band. Our scoring official is the only one who knows what each cigar is, and she's responsible for compiling and averaging each tasting panel members scoring cards.

Tasting panel members smoke and rate each cigar based on a set of characteristics designed to assign a numerical grade based on how well the cigar is constructed, how well it was blended and its overall desirability.

All cigars start out rated at 100 points. From there, points are deducted for items such as poor construction, low-quality materials, burn issues, and lack of flavor.

Once a panel reviewer finishes a cigar, they turn their completed tasting card in to our scorekeeper who then compiles and averages the scores.

In order for a cigar to even qualify to appear in *Cigar & Spirits Magazine*, it must attain a rating of 80 or higher. This insures that we only recommend the very best cigars to our readers, and precludes non-premium cigars from appearing upon these hallowed pages.

MEET THE **EXPERTS**

With great power comes great responsibility and these experts take their responsibility very seriously, which is why they've requested we keep their true names and identities secret.

MR. X - The Chief of our panel, Mr. X has over 40 years of experience in the premium cigar and tobacco industries. Originally from Cuba, he has an affinity for medium bodied cigars and Cuban Rum. He states his music preferences as The Rat Pack and The Rolling Stones.

MR. O - A Brazilian-Portuguese transplant at a young age, Mr. O is known for his love of rich, full bodied cigars and Sangria. We call him Mr. Charuto. In his free time, you can find Mr. O outdoors smoking his favorite puro while hunting upland game birds and blasting old Merle Haggard songs in his pickup truck. His 22 years of experience make him an influential member on the tasting panel.

MR. K - The Kingman, Mr. K is an affluent countryman from Ireland who loves a good Irish Whiskey and a full bodied cigar. His 19 years of cigar industry experience is nearly overshadowed by his poor music choices...most notably, his being an unapologetic Bieber fan, for which he is constantly harassed by the other members of the tasting panel when he takes control of the music in the smoking room.

MR. Y - Known inside the panel as Mr. "Why Not?" is the troublemaker of the group. A fiend for street tacos and Añejo tequila, Mr. Y always seems to sniff out the best local eateries and his fondness for mild bodied cigars is matched only by his love of his Ducati, which he rides every weekend. His 17 years of cigar experience is backed by an exceptional palate.

MR. M - Originally from Canada (or so he claims), Mr. M enjoys mild-medium cigars, Bourbon Whiskey, and Penguins Hockey...a life decision that no one quite understands. His knowledge of premium cigars extends back 14 years to when he first started working in a cigar shop out of college.

MR. Q - The youngest member of the tasting panel, Mr. Q has 8 years of experience with premium cigars and is our resident "early adopter" always sporting the latest wearable tech gadget and accessories. His collection of fine Dominican cigars is outmatched only by his collection of tech devices.

MR. V - He got his nickname for his love of Vegas, gambling, fast women and faster cars. His favorite past times include watching F1 races and flying private. He also claims to be a "Platinum Member" of the Mile High Club. His premium cigar experience clocks in at 26 years and counting.

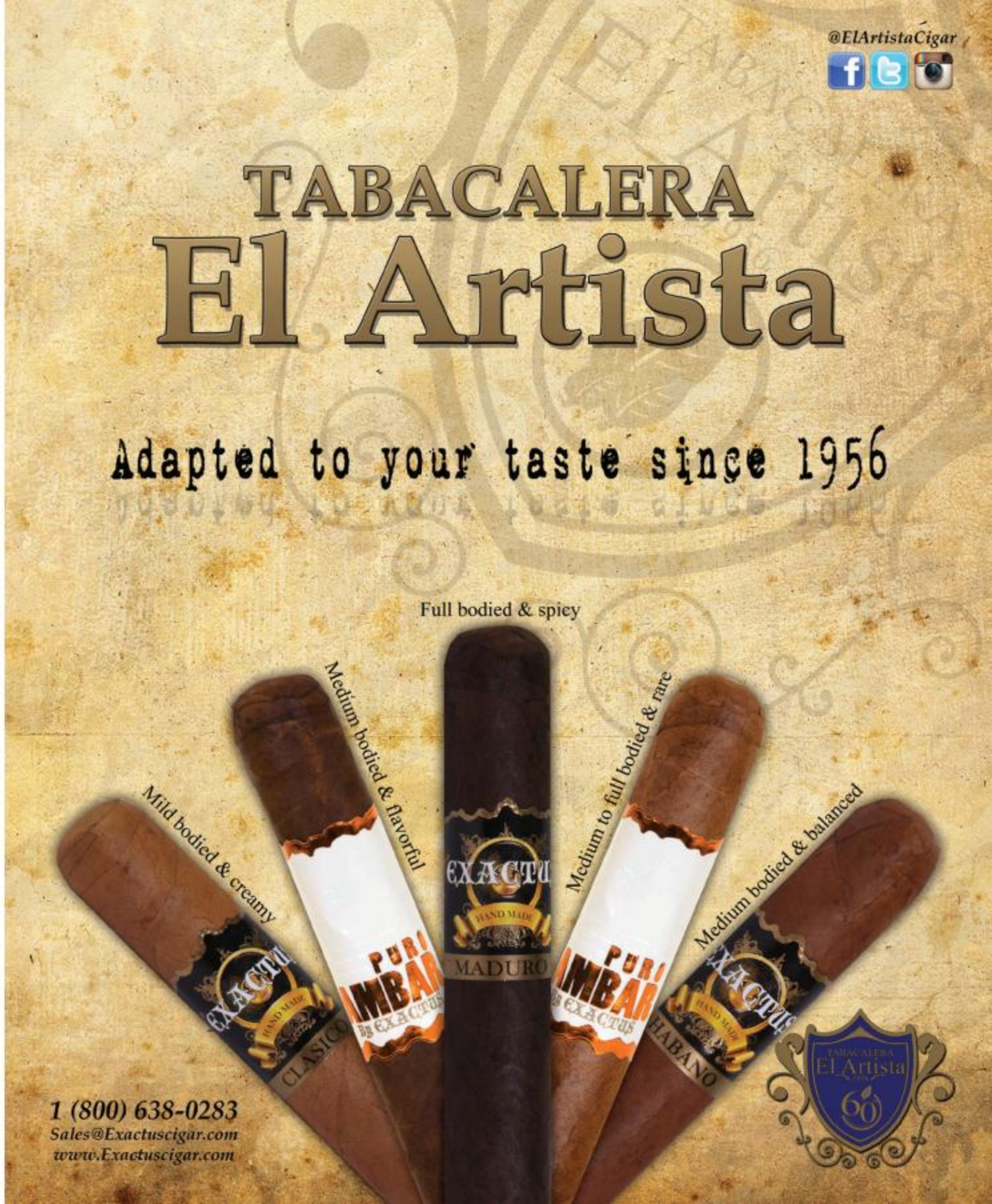
EVERY CIGAR THAT IS RECEIVED FOR REVIEW IS UN-BANDED AND THEN AFFIXED WITH A PLAIN NUMBERED BAND. OUR SCORING OFFICIAL IS THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS WHAT EACH CIGAR IS, AND SHE'S RESPONSIBLE FOR COMPILING AND AVERAGING EACH TASTING PANEL MEMBERS SCORING CARDS.

MR. B - Our very own Italian stallion, Mr. B has 18 years of industry experience and loves Bordeaux, cannoli and full bodied cigars. Everyone thinks he's connected yet he maintains "There's no such thing as the mafia." He also claims that no one has ever told him "No," which explains why he's on our tasting panel.

MR. W - Introduces himself to everyone as an M.D. which he then expounds on by clarifying by saying he's a "Money Doctor". Medium bodied cigars, single malt scotch, and the finer things in life are his favorite things. 26 years of cigar smoking experience make him a valued member of the tasting panel.

MR. F - Growing up in Texas, Mr. F is a cowboy through and through. He spends his weekends making homemade moonshine, smoking medium-full bodied cigars and watching Professional Bull Riding. Mr. F claims his one weakness in the world are "those women in their daisy duke shorts."

Stay tuned for more information about the members of the tasting panel, as we dive further into the tasting process in future issues.



BALMORAL...

The Story Behind ROYAL AGIO CIGARS

By Lincoln Salazar

I AM VERY BLESSED- every now and then I get to go see first hand how certain cigars and spirits are made. 99.9% of the time I am astonished by the craftsmanship of these products. I'm about to tell you a story; no, let's say a journey. In the summer of last year, I went to see a cigar brand and manufacturer that I was skeptical of, but once I saw with my own eyes my mind was forever changed and open. ▸▸▸

AMERICA'S
ORIGINAL CRAFT VODKA®
DISTILLED AUSTIN TEXAS USA BOTTLED
My American vodka beats the giant imports every day.
Try American! It's better.
-Tito
"★★★★" Spirit Journal
Unanimous Double Gold Winner!!! World Spirits Competition
"America's first craft sippin' vodka" Wall Street Journal
"Smooth, I mean really smooth!" CNN
Tito's Handmade VODKA
Crafted in an Old Fashioned Pot Still by America's Original Microdistillery
AUSTIN ★ TEXAS
DISTILLED & BOTTLED BY FIFTH GENERATION, INC. AUSTIN, TX. 40% ALC./VOL.
Certified GF Gluten-Free
TitosVodka.com
Handcrafted to be savored responsibly
DISTILLED & BOTTLED BY FIFTH GENERATION INC. 40% ALC./VOL. © 2016 TITO'S HANDMADE VODKA

IN September I embarked on a journey from Los Angeles to the Netherlands to see and discover a cigar manufacturer not in the usual spots. My thoughts were "what do people in the Netherlands know about making premium cigars" (or tobacco), but hell, some friends in the industry I very much respect said you have to come with us so to see this so I said "what the hell, why not?" I leave Los Angeles in the morning to prepare for a 13-hour flight with a stop into Miami and a 9-hour time difference. So I get into Miami for my quick layover, then to arrive in Brussels the next morning. Well first off I'm not much of a big sleeper so I didn't sleep on the plane and have been traveling now with no sleep for about 24 hours. I'm thinking I cannot wait to go change my clothes, rest up, and be at dinner later that night. As we're unloading the plane our host from Agio says "Are you ready to go have the best beer you have ever had?" Keep in mind, it's currently 9am. My eyes brighten up, and the tired look on my face is transformed into an ear-to-ear smile. These are my kind of people. As we load up in the vehicle to go about 40 miles from the airport to a Trappist Monk brewery by the name of La Trappe. Now, this is not your normal brewery-all of the beer that they produce is made by monks that have taken a vow of silence.

After walking around this beautiful monastery and brewery, getting a full tour of the fermenting process, and even the bourbon barrels that the beer was aged in. It was finally time to taste this beer and I was licking my lips with excitement.

They took us into a room to finally have a taste that I have learned so much about. The second I took my first sip my pallet was instantly in 7th heaven. The creamy smooth texture and flavor put my palate on fire. I've never had a beer with so much character and complexity. I was instantly sold. I recommend to anyone that is ever in Belgium you must go tour this brewery and share in the history and artistry of this must have beer.

Well after a "few" beers and some great food it was time to go back to the hotel and rest for the next day to see what Agio Cigars is all about.

I wake up about 9am the next day, after finally getting some great sleep after over 24 hours awake and nothing but beer and cigars in me (which there's no way in the world I would have rather slept then tasted that incredible beer).

A "TRAPPIST" HAS TO SATISFY A NUMBER OF STRICT CRITERIA BEFORE IT MAY BEAR THIS NAME:

1. The beer must be brewed within the walls of a Trappist monastery, either by the monks themselves or under their supervision.
2. The brewery must be of secondary importance within the monastery and it should witness to the business practices proper to a monastic way of life.
3. The brewery is not intended to be a profit-making venture. The income covers the living expenses of the monks and the maintenance of the buildings and grounds. Whatever remains is donated to charity for social work and to help persons in need.

It's time to go see the Agio factory, and about 25 minutes later we're pulling up to a humongous factory the size of a small city. Rarely have I seen anything like this on most my journeys. As we arrive we are greeted by a tall gentleman with a Dutch accent who welcomes us to the Agio Factory.

We are led into a beautiful room that's very modern and sophisticated. The best part though is they had laid out some cigars for us to smoke. The morning provided the perfect setting to enjoy a cigar with my coffee. I then notice they have a cigar laid out more then the others that looked beautifully wrapped and with a gorgeous construction to it. I right away ask what cigar is this? I knew right away this is the cigar I wanted to try. Its name was Balmoral Anejo XO. I have had a lot of cigars in my life but this is one I am not familiar with in the States. So I'm anxious to try. I pick it up, cut it, toast the foot, and instantly get flavors of a creamy, almost soft chocolate and java flavors to my palate; very smooth and with lots of flavor.

I couldn't believe that I'm in the Netherlands and they are making cigars like this. Well come to find out they are one of the biggest makers of cigars in all of Europe and have launched a premium line made in the Dominican Republic with its master blender being Willem Van Overveld and from the factory director Francisco Batista in the Dominican Republic. Once again I was completely impressed and I did not expect this great of a cigar. When I say "great" I mean that it has become one of my all times favorites. So I had to find out more by asking some more questions.

C&S: How long are the cigars aged?
Balmoral: 4-6 weeks minimal

C&S: Your mentioned there was something very special about the cigar rollers?
Agio: A good roller can usually roll 40-50 cigars maximum. For these special cigars, the rollers can only do 20 cigars an hour in order to make it perfectly executed.

C&S: How many cigars come in a box of Balmoral XO?
Agio: 20

C&S: Other than the Balmoral, how many cigars does Agio produce a year?
Agio: We produce over 750 million cigars a year, making us one of the largest cigar makers in the world.

C&S: Where is your premium cigar factory in the Dominican Republic?
Agio: San Pedro de Macoris

C&S: What year was the Agio founded?
Agio: 1904

C&S: Being that Agio has been making cigars for over a decade what is it with the Balmoral that you enter this market?
Boris: We have a passion for cigars, it is in our blood. We love it and cannot wait to see it even more in the American Market.

After speaking with the Agio team and Boris himself, I really got to witness first hand the passion that they have for premium cigars which has been passed down from generation to generation. Every time I smoke a Balmoral the cigar speaks for itself. The factory was beautiful, the people were amazing, and this is definitely a trip and factory I will never forget. ▶▶▶

I COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT I'M IN THE NETHERLANDS AND THEY ARE MAKING CIGARS LIKE THIS.

the HISTORY *of* BALMORAL

IN THE EARLY 1900'S the Netherlands was the center of premium cigars. Hundreds of small factories made excellent cigars, all by hand, with tobaccos that were cultivated across the world. Balmoral was one of those small factories that were able to adapt to changing consumer demands, grow and improve. Today, four generations later, they are the last independent cigar company in the Netherlands and export our cigars to more than 100 countries worldwide. ▶▶▶

MAY 9TH, 1904

Company founded by Jacques Wintermans: A. Wintermans & Zonen. Start-up capital: NLG 200!

1908
Harrie Wintermans, brother of Jacques, joins as partner.

1911
Construction of the factory and residence at De Wolverstraat in Duizel.

1913 - 1928
Various establishments are opened between 1913 and 1928, including the one in Reusel.

1925
The second generation joins the company, starting with son Adriaan.

1926
Son Marcel follows a year later.

1934
Harrie starts own business in the Eersel plant and calls the company Henri Wintermans Sigarenfabrieken.

1935
Besides Winzo and Cloveniers, Agio is added to companies brands .

1940 – 1945
WWII, The cigar-making industry comes to a virtual standstill. To ensure continuity, surrogate cigars are made, such as Coronas and tuitcigarillos of the Intermezzo brand.

1950
The brand Agio (which means premium) is promoted to company name.

1954
Agio marks its 50th anniversary. To celebrate the occasion, the Agio Gouden Oogst is introduced with great success.

1961
Opening of production facility in Geel. Soon the plant has a workforce of 800 people.

1963
Construction of the most advanced filler plant of Europe in Duizel and the start of an own company school.

1966
Jack Wintermans, son of Marcel and a member of the third generation, joins the family business.

1967
Agio Tip is launched on the market and immediately becomes a huge international hit.

1972
"Operation Malta": much of the production process is transferred to the island of Malta.

Introduction of a new bobbin system there in 1976 proves to be a smart move.

1974
Introduction of Mehari's, a hit; Mehari's would later on grow into the largest Agio brand.

1979
Ad Wintermans, son of Marcel and brother of Jack, joins the board of Agio.

1983
Agio takes over: the Panter and Balmoral brands are bought from Douwe Egberts and turned into highly successful labels. Panter is now available in over 100 countries.

1985
Agio opens a new plant in Sri Lanka, with 2000 employees the larges Agio facility.

1990
Agio opens a facility in the Dominican Republic where later on, besides bobbins, handmade long fillers would be made as well.

1996
Agio passes the magical barrier of a half a billion cigars sold.

2002
Boris Wintermans, son of Ad and a member of the fourth generation, joins the family business.

Construction and taking into use of the new bunch and filler plant in Westerlo.

MAY 9TH, 2004

Agio celebrates its 100th anniversary and not only achieves record sales of 800 million cigars, but also receives the designation "Royal"!

2007
Expansion of the production facility and construction of office buildings in Westerlo. With a floor area of 30,000 m2, this is now the largest cigar factory in Europe.

2009
Jonas Wintermans, son of Ad and brother of Boris, joins the board of Agio.

GEAR GUIDE

GRAMM WORKS

By Benjamin Winokur

CIGAR ASHTRAYS AND TRAVEL HUMIDORS seem to be a dime-a-dozen these days. There are hundreds, if not thousands of cigar accessories out on the market today that are designed to improve your cigar enjoyment experience.

Often, people wonder if ashtrays are really an item that can be reviewed- there really isn't much to them right? I mean, what does an ashtray need other than a place to rest your cigar and a bowl deep enough to hold the ash so it doesn't blow everywhere each time a fan or the wind kicks up.

This was a question I set out to answer when GRAMM Works provided me with their Cinque Forte, and Stag ashtrays.

The Cinque Forte is a 5-finger ashtray, CNC machined from a solid block of aluminum that weighs in at 3.5 pounds. If nothing else, it makes for a great self-defense weapon in a time of need. The Stag, is a smaller, single finger ashtray that is designed for when you only need a cigar rest and ashtray for yourself. For the last few weeks it has become my "go-to" ashtray when I'm writing. It has a small footprint and is well balanced. I can set it on a coffee table, or even the arm of my chair or couch and it stays put thanks to the extra weight and heft. The only downside is that it does fill up rather quickly with ash, but is to be expected due to the smaller size.

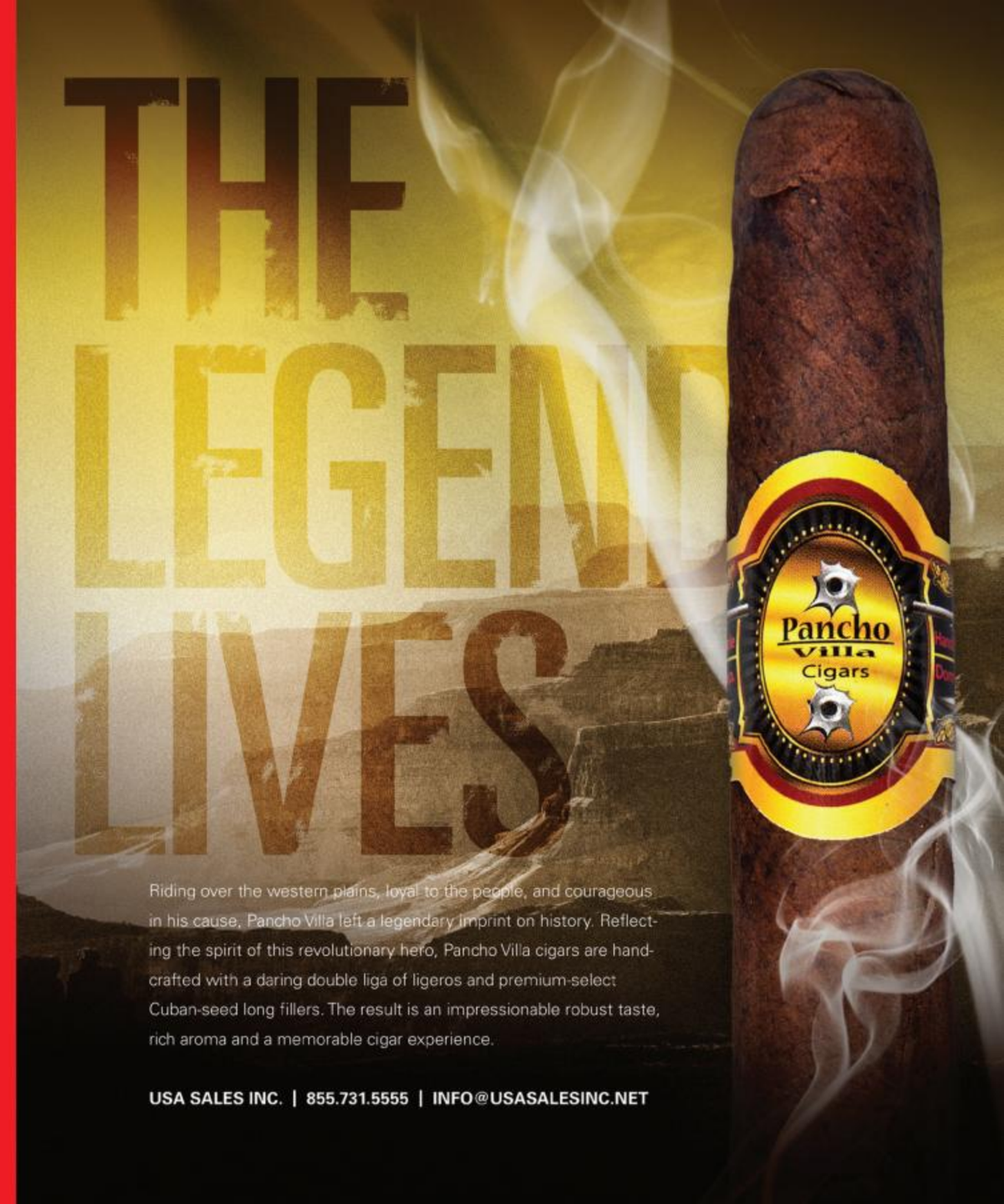
The Cinque Forte is also an excellent ashtray, the bowl deep enough to collect plenty of ashy; however, I found that when multiple people tried to use the ashtray, there wasn't enough room for all the cigars to sit around the circumference without all the sticks hitting each other in the center (unless everyone is smoking Robusto or shorter cigars). That being said, it was the only caveat I could find with the ashtray, making it a product I'm eager to recommend.

Another fantastic product that GRAMM Works sent in to us for review is their 7" Built Churchill Tube. Also manufactured from aluminum and CNC machined, it features a built in hygrometer on the cap, holds up to 5 cigars (also available in a single-cigar carrier, sans the hygrometer cap), and even has a place to hold a Boveda pack in the bottom cap. It is also lined with a strip of Spanish cedar on the inside of the tube. I have used this cigar tube EVERY. SINGLE. DAY. Since I received it. Whether I'm just driving around to appointments, golfing, or hanging out at a barbeque with friends, it works exactly how it was designed.

Finally, a less well-known product that GRAMM Works provides are CNC Machined shot glasses. Yes. Shot glasses. They're aluminum. They're solid. And they work as you would expect. Where would any self-respecting Cigar & Spirits enthusiast be without a set of shot glasses to go along with their new cigar ashtray and carrying tube?

You can learn more about GRAMM Works at **www.grammworks.com** and for a limited time they are offering **30% off your order with the code cigarandspirits30** at checkout.

The products in this review were provided to Cigar & Spirits Magazine by GRAMM Works for review consideration. GRAMM Works is an advertiser in Cigar & Spirits Magazine and online at Cigarandspirits.com



HOW DOES YOUR COCKTAIL GROW?

By Kim Campbell Thornton

Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme are just a few of the fresh and flavorful cocktail ingredients you can grow in your garden, on your deck, or in a kitchen window.

Herbs, fruits, and flowers straight from the earth add color and zing to gin drinks, margaritas, martinis, bubbly and more. Your garden can also be the source for homemade liqueurs, bitters, syrups, shrubs and infusions. Just thinking of all the possibilities is enough to make your mouth water.

I have been intrigued by the idea of a cocktail garden ever since I read Amy Stewart's intoxicating book *The Drunken Botanist: The Plants That Create the World's Great Drinks*.

Basil, cucumber, lavender, parsley, rhubarb, strawberries and watermelon are just a few of the herbs, fruits and vegetables that can go from garden-to-glass for a refreshing and distinctive drink.

Besides the pleasure of their flavor and freshness, homegrown ingredients have other advantages. "The biggest advantage is cost, as herbs can get pricey during certain parts of the year," says Chris Milligan, bar manager and mixologist at **Secreto Lounge** in Santa Fe, New Mexico. "Also, by growing your own, you have control over water quality and fertilization. My favorite thing, though, is the pride in growing and then creating." Milligan loves lots of herbs, but points to basil, rosemary and sage as his favorites. "Basil is easily approachable by almost any guest," he says. "Rosemary goes with so many other flavors, and it is versatile in how it can be used. Sage is especially fun as it is a huge part of the New Mexico culture. Our smoked sage margarita was created to reflect the blessing and purifying aspects of burning sage."

A cocktail garden also gives you access to ingredients that you might otherwise have difficulty finding. Thai basil? Cuban mojito mint? (Yes, there are specialty mints out there, and this one is native to Cuba, home of the mojito.)

Looking for something off the beaten path, how about Salad burnet? This herbaceous perennial's tender young leaves have a light cucumber flavor and can also be substituted for mint in some recipes. It's a favorite of gardener and cocktail aficionado Lucinda Hutson of Austin, Texas, who appreciates its beautiful serrated leaves. "It's delicious in a gin and tonic with slices of cucumbers, rose petals, and some good Fever Tree or Q Tonic," she says. "It's good in all sorts of cooler cocktails."

Hutson, author of *Viva Tequila! Cocktails, Cooking and Other Agave Adventures*, says one of the easiest ways to use herbs is to flavor a glass of bubbly. At cocktail parties she hosts in her garden, she pours guests a glass of Champagne, cava, prosecco or other sparkling wine and then sends them off to pick a sprig of an aromatic herb to flavor it. Lavender is a good choice, as are lemon-scented herbs such as lemon verbena, lemon thyme, lemon balm and lemongrass.

Not sure what to plant? Choose a theme based on your favorite spirits or types of cocktails. Bourbon and rum cozy up to blackberries, mint, rhubarb, cardamom and any citrus. Tequila takes to kiwifruit, strawberries, watermelon and Thai basil. Gin goes well with basil, cucumber, lemon and strawberries. While vodka, with its neutral flavor, can pair with just about anything. For example, you could plant a Bloody Mary garden with cherry tomatoes, celery, jalapeños, chives and lemon.

Other interesting and unusual choices include borage, chocolate mint, elderflower, hyssop, Kentucky Colonel mint, lime basil, pineapple mint and pineapple sage. Don't forget floral garnishes such as nasturtiums, pansies and roses. Anything you plan to use in cocktails should be grown organically.

Don't be afraid to experiment with your garden's yield, "Be open and playful," Milligan says. "I have done drinks with herbs and spirits that I thought might not work, but lo' and behold, they did!"

Make It at Home

THAI BASIL GIMLET

Chris Milligan of the **Secreto Lounge** in Santa Fe, New Mexico, shares a recipe for a fresh and refreshing summer sipper.

2 ozs Nolet's Silver Gin
¾ oz lime cordial
2 leaves Thai basil
6 drops Bitter End Thai Bitters

In a mixing glass, muddle lime cordial and basil. Add gin and bitters and shake with ice. Double strain into a chilled coupe or cocktail glass. Garnish with Thai basil leaf.

SUMMER IN PROVENCE

Troy Smith, beverage director at **The Montage** in Laguna Beach, shared the following recipe.

2 oz Nolet's silver gin
¼ oz Cherry Heering
¼ oz Montenegro Amaro
¾ oz fresh lemon juice
5 to 6 blueberries
¼ oz simple syrup
3 fresh lavender buds

In a mixing tin, muddle blueberries and add all liquors, lemon juice and simple syrup. Add ice and the lavender buds and shake. Fine strain into a cocktail glass and garnish with a sprig of lavender and fresh blueberries.

BUDDHA'S HAND LIQUEUR

One of the more unusual citrus fruits is Buddha's Hand (also known as fingered citron). It has a fragrant odor and strange appearance. Dan Townley and Nancy Mueller, members of the California Rare Fruit Growers, make liqueur with it. Here's how:

1 Buddha's Hand
4 large oranges
Water
1.5-2 cups sugar
2 cups Ketel One Vodka

Peel the Buddha's Hand, making sure to remove only the yellow skin and not the bitter white pith. Mueller says it can be awkward to peel and suggests cutting the "fingers" off and then working around the outside of the main part of the fruit (the "hand" portion).

Juice the oranges, then add the juice and water to a simmer pot with 1.5 to 2 cups sugar. Simmer for 10 to 12 minutes, then let cool.

After the syrup has cooled, add the Buddha's hand skin, two cups of Ketel One vodka and stir well. Store in a swing-top bale jar and age in a cool, dark place for 1 to 3 months. Strain, rebottle and continue to age for up to three more months; however, you don't need to wait the entire time before drinking it or making cocktails with it.

Let Someone Else Make It

If you have a black thumb or no garden space, don't despair. Plenty of craft cocktail bars are famous for their concoctions containing fresh ingredients. Some have their own gardens on site, while others make regular trips to the local farmer's market, basing their drinks on what's in season. Some to try:

Lobby Lounge, Montage
Laguna Beach, California.
The Desperado combines Avion Silver Tequila, Mezcal, fresh lime, fresh grapefruit and lavender syrup.

Playground
Santa Ana, California.
The menu changes frequently, but a current offering is the Purple Rain with St. George Botanivore Gin, lavender, lemon and honey.

Cure
New Orleans, Louisiana.
Cocktails include the Cloud Piercer, a kiwi and rosemary-infused shrub paired with Champagne.

Chianti Restaurant at Mission Point Resort
Mackinac Island, Michigan.
A large hillside cocktail garden yields lemon sage, fennel, five types of mint and more for the cocktail menu. Robinson's Folly features Bulleit bourbon, grapefruit, simple syrup and basil leaves.

Secreto Lounge at Hotel St. Francis
Santa Fe, New Mexico.
Look for the Agave Way, with black grapes, green chile, Espolon Reposado tequila, lime juice and agave nectar.

Blue Hill at Stone Bar
Pocantico Hills, New York.
Depending on the season, you might see on the menu an Herbal Elixir that blends gin and Chartreuse with green apple, lime juice, celery juice, tarragon syrup and celery bitters.

Excellence Unearthed
Hidden Treasure

Handcrafted from an exotic blend of Piloto Cubano ligero, Criollo 98 ligero, and vintage Seco, Hidden Treasure is bound with distinctive Nicaraguan leaves contained within a Viso Cuban Binder. The result is a cigar of rich aroma, sweeping creamy texture and medium spicy tones.

Hidden Treasure – It's what the world is looking for in fine cigars.

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ROLL OUT *the* BARREL

By: Sarah E. Coleman

MORE THAN JUST A TRANSPORTATION VESSEL, THE BARREL IN WHICH BOURBON IS STORED PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN SHAPING THE FINAL PRODUCT.

WHILE IT MIGHT SEEM THAT A BOURBON BARREL IS NOTHING MORE THAN A UNIQUE WAY TO STORE AMERICA'S SIGNATURE SPIRIT, NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. MASTER DISTILLERS, AND OTHERS INVOLVED IN THE BOURBON-MAKING PROCESS SPEND AS MUCH TIME AGONIZING OVER THE SOURCING AND CREATION OF THE BARRELS AS THEY DO OVER THE RECIPE FOR THE BOURBON STORED WITHIN IT.

All barrels made in the United States that hold bourbon are required, by federal law, to be made of charred oak and to be used only once. While this may seem wasteful, there is actually a healthy market for used bourbon barrels. Some barrels are reused to hold wine, rum, scotch and beer. A more-recent phenomenon, driven by the explosion of interest in bourbon, is to repurpose used barrels for everything from garden planters, furniture and wine racks, to unique works of art.

WHY WHITE OAK?

Most distillers in the Unites States use white oak (Quercus Alba) to create their bourbon barrels. Though history has shown that this is the wood of choice for storing bourbon, some distillers have used French Oak and other types of oak to store their aging bourbon.

So, why is oak the wood of choice for bourbon barrels? For one significant reason: White oak wood contains tyloses, which essentially act as "plugs" for the pipes that allow for the flow of water inside a tree when it is living. Activated when the tree is stressed, tyloses dam up the vascular tissue of a tree to prevent further damage.

In barrel making, these tyloses create a leak-proof seal that is ideal for storing liquids with little air exchange. Additionally, white oak is abundant in North American forests and the trees can grow quite large. Many distilleries in Kentucky source their wood from Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri and Minnesota.

A COMPLEX CONTAINER

Bourbon has hundreds of compounds that contribute to its unique flavor and many of these compounds are naturally found in the oak wood from which bourbon barrels are made; the wood imparts its color and flavor into the finished product. Wood is highly complex; its chemistry varies by individual tree and depends on where it grew, what elements it experienced as it grew, and what stressed the tree during its growing season.

WOOD IS HIGHLY COMPLEX; ITS CHEMISTRY VARIES BY INDIVIDUAL TREE AND DEPENDS ON WHERE IT GREW, WHAT ELEMENTS IT EXPERIENCED AS IT GREW, AND WHAT STRESSED THE TREE DURING ITS GROWING SEASON.

Because of this, some distilleries are now producing test batches of bourbon using barrels made from trees in specific locations to see what characteristics might be imparted into the bourbon's flavor.

Oak barrels add taste and aroma to the whiskey. Some of these include vanillin, toastiness and wood sugars. Oak also removes undesirable flavors from the spirit, including sulphur compounds.

> **WHEN DRYING THE WOOD OUTDOORS, EXPOSURE TO THE ELEMENTS HELPS IMPART SWEET, SPICY AND FRUITY FLAVORS INTO THE FINAL WHISKEY.**

ANATOMY OF A BOURBON BARREL

Barrels are made in a cooperage, and those who make them are called coopers. "Coopering," is a skill that has been used since ancient times; barrel making has been depicted in ancient Egyptian tombs as well as been mentioned by Greek writers.

Kentucky, home of the Bourbon Trail, boasts multiple cooperages located throughout the state. Each bourbon maker has different barrel requirements in order to set their spirit apart from others, but some barrel characteristics are the same no matter what company is producing them.

Every barrel used to hold bourbon is made of between 33 and 36 staves, or pieces of wood. Irregularly shaped, these pieces are not held together with glue or nails; they are held together solely by the pressure of the wood on the metal rings. Each barrel has six hoops and 12 rivets that hold the steel together, and can hold up to 53 gallons of bourbon.

Though nowadays the hoops holding the wood together are generally made of iron, years ago these rings were made from flexible bits of wood. These hoops go over the "bilge," or the "bulging center" of the barrels' shape.

The liquid is placed inside a barrel using the bung hole, a hole within a wider stave in the barrel. A "bung" or plug is used to seal the hole in the bourbon barrel.

AN INTENSE PROCESS

Barrel making, like most parts of the bourbon-making process, is incredibly hands-on. Though White Oak is readily available, barrels are not easy to make. The wood must be harvested and sawn carefully to avoid mold and decomposition. The wood then must be resawn into staves and made into barrels. This entire process can take up to three years.

How long the wood is dried before it is made into barrels has a direct impact on the taste of the bourbon it produces. Though both air and kiln drying are acceptable means of drying the wood used to make bourbon barrels, most wood used to make barrels has been kiln dried for a few weeks before it is pressed into use. Drying the wood too quickly can create cracks and splits that can cause a barrel to leak.

When drying the wood outdoors, exposure to the elements helps impart sweet, spicy and fruity flavors into the final whiskey. Green wood is high in tannic acids, which can taste harsh; exposure to rain and sun can tame tannic acid levels while unlocking the vanilla flavors in the wood. Exposure to high heat (like that of a kiln) helps finish the drying process.

These piece of wood are then cut into staves to create the pieces of wood that will be used to form the barrel.

>> Each barrel has six hoops and 12 rivets that hold the steel together, and can hold up to 53 gallons of bourbon.

THE CHARRING PROCESS

In many cooperages today, wooden staves are steamed prior to being shaped into a barrel to allow them to be bent into place before the hoops are added. They are then charred with an open flame to caramelize the wood and release desirable flavors to be imparted to the bourbon ages inside. There are several theories around when barrels were first charred intentionally to impart flavor to aging bourbon. Some accounts depict that the first charring occurred by accident. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, when steam was harder to source, coopers would assemble the staves, then use a strong fire to heat the inside of the barrel in order to make the wood flexible enough to be bent into barrel shape—this charring was a necessity of the manufacturing process. Only after steam was more readily available did it became clear that this charring was unexpectedly adding flavor to the bourbon.

Though charring is no longer necessary to shape the barrel, it is now a key component in what creates the unmistakable flavor of American Bourbon whiskey. The caramelization of the oak allows a myriad of flavors to be imparted on aging bourbon, including high levels of vanillin, caramel flavors, tannins, spices, and cloves.

The use of fire on the inside of the bourbon barrels breaks the chemical bond of lignin and cellulose, and creates smaller molecules that add flavor to the liquid stored inside it. Each distillery has preferred specifications for how they want their barrels created, including how they are dried and toasted, as well as the level and length of charring they prefer.

Bourbon barrels are typically charred for 40 seconds to 1 minute, but some distilleries have experimented with longer charring periods to see how it affects the finished product. Charring is the most dramatic parts of the barrel-making process. Open-ended barrels are placed over burners and exposed to heat as high as 1,500 degrees F. The amount of time the barrel is exposed to the flame will determine how deep into the wood the char goes.

Different coopers define their own char levels, typically on a numeric scale. For example, Independent Stave Company defines a #1 char as 20 seconds of open flame, while a #7 char is an entire 90 seconds of charring.

> **THE BARRELS ARE THEN CHARRED WITH AN OPEN FLAME TO CARAMELIZE THE WOOD AND RELEASE DESIRABLE FLAVORS TO BE IMPARTED TO THE BOURBON AGES INSIDE.**

>> Distillers fill the barrel with whiskey and move it to an aging warehouse, where it will be stored.

THE AGING PROCESS

Once charred, the heads of the barrel, also charred through open flame, are attached to each end and the bung hole is drilled into one of the staves on the middle bulge area. The barrel is then filled with water to check for leaks, and if none are found, it is shipped off to a distiller to fill with bourbon for aging. Most distillers also conduct their own inspection of barrels before filling them with bourbon. A leak or imperfection in the barrel could cause the precious bourbon inside it to go bad–a significant loss as a product that ages for many years cannot be replaced easily.

Distillers fill the barrel with whiskey and move it to an aging warehouse, where it will be stored. "Bourbon" has no minimum age requirement--it could be aged for one day and still be called "bourbon." However, if the product is labeled as "straight bourbon," it must be aged for a minimum of 2 years.

Barrel houses are buildings where barrels are stored, but they can vary tremendously. The environment in which a barrel ages is a critical part of the resulting bourbon flavor, and different distillers have their own traditions and preferences for how they age their product. Some are heated, some are unheated; some are constructed from brick and some from metal. Some buildings have windows, and some do not. Some utilize a shelf-like system to store the barrels (known as ricks, hence the term "Rick House"), and some store barrels on pallets. Distillers will rotate their barrels periodically to expose them to multiple temperature variations, which helps create consistency in flavor among different barrels aging in one warehouse. The barrel also "breathes," as the alcohol passes in and out of the charring, creating a smoother bourbon as impurities are filtered out.

A PERFECT PRODUCT

While each distillery has their own recipe for not only the grain bill used in their bourbon, they also have a finely tuned recipe for the creation of their barrels, involving everything from how long the oak wood they use is aged to how many seconds a barrel is charred for. This attention to detail allows each bourbon to have its own distinct flavor, creating vast differences between bourbons and even between different bourbon products from the same company.

THE ANGELS' SHARE

By federal law, "straight bourbon" must be aged for a minimum of 2 years. Though the barrel may be filled completely full before being placed in the barrel house, when it is removed and then opened for tasting, some of the liquid is missing. Caused by evaporation, this phenomenon is known as the "angel's share," and can be 10 percent of the barrel's volume the first year the barrel is aged and 2 percent every year thereafter. Legend has it that guardian angels watch over the product as it ages, hence the unique moniker.

PERFECT PAIRINGS

A Delicious Duet for Your Palate

CASAMIGOS AÑEJO
40% ABV
750 ML
MSRP $59.99

MY FATHER CONNECTICUT TORO
WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Connecticut
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Nicaragua
MSRP: $8.50

MY FATHER CONNECTICUT TORO

By Greg Mays

Classified as a mild cigar from the Garcia family's My Father line, the Connecticut label of the My Father series is flavorful nonetheless. Jose "Pepin" Garcia and his son Jaime blend the Connecticut line with an Ecuadorian Connecticut wrapper (the only leaves not harvested on the Garcia's estate), with their own Nicaragua Corojo '99 binder, and Nicaragua Habano-Criollo filler.

The initial light of the cigar delivers warm spice to the palate, followed by dry hay notes as the heat dissipates. At times the My Father Connecticut delivers a subtle peppery cream note, but ultimately the smoking experience is mild, dry and herbal. It's definitely an increased flavor profile from the old guard of mild cigars and certainly offers a nice stop-gap for those seeking a milder smoking experience but prefer the flavors that Nicaraguan tobacco delivers.

When paired with Casamigos Añejo Tequila, the flavors of each are compatible, but not necessarily complementary in profile.

Casamigos has some distilling techniques which lead to a unique tequila experience, primarily in the length of time their agave piñas are roasted and fermented. This leads to a more agave-forward spirit, and even in their older products like the Añejo, the agave's flavor is center stage to the oak and wood notes you usually find in older tequila. Casamigos is using American oak barrels originally used for whiskey that they recondition to use for their tequilas.

When Casamigos Añejo is sipped neat and paired with the My Father Connecticut, the tequila is the taste leader throughout, though the two make for a lengthy pairing partnership - as you smoke and sip, the dry cool Connecticut wrapper makes your mouth water, and the Casamigos Añejo delivers with a citrus-forward (especially orange) roasted agave flavor that is never underpowered for this cigar.

With a pairing like this, I ultimately added some ice and club soda to the tequila, with a twist of orange, to enhance the complementary pairings of the two and to help quench the thirst of the cigar in general. The final half of the pairing experience and the two really began to hit a stride together. As I sipped the Casamigos, I could taste the smokier elements of their long-roasted agave; a pairing that was initially off-balance ended up quite nice, but it takes patience on the part of the smoker to wait for the flavors to settle in.

RATED 93 TOP 10 CIGAR & SPIRITS
RATED 92 #9 - TOP 25 CIGARS OF 2015 Cigar
RATED 91 Cigar Snob

THE PERFECT PAIR

At Sindicato, we're on a constant search to find perfection. That's why we have industry greats, Eduardo Fernandez and Arsenio Ramos, along with Alberto and Alejandro Turrent, blending, crafting, and growing tobacco for our finest cigars. They are the two perfect pairs that have crafted our perfect pair – Sindicato Natural and Sindicato Maduro.

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ROMA CRAFT TABAC INTEMPERANCE BROTHERLY KINDNESS XVIII GRAN ROBUSTO *By Greg Mays*

Don't you just love cigar names nowadays? The Intemperance Brotherly Kindness has a slight shaggy foot, making it a good-looking cigar and an easy one to light. The understated ring is handy, particularly for the ring-on smokers amongst us.

Also featuring an Ecuadorian Connecticut wrapper, the Intemperance lights sweet, with touches of leather and cream. There is a very faint barnyard flavor, though I found it to be more like damp wood than manure and hay.

When engaging with Casamigos again, I was surprised to find it take on a spicier profile, imparted by the wood it's aged in. It delivers a raw oak bite and less of the toasted barrel; something I had not detected in my first pairing.

The wrapper on the Intemperance became more vanilla-forward as it smoked, and the construction was impeccable. The cap is a little bit overwrapped, helping construction to hold together; regardless of the cut you prefer, a welcome quality for a cigar in this price range.

The pairing between Casamigos Añejo and the Intemperance is a tight fit: there is an interplay of apricot, vanilla, spice and wood that is tightly woven from start to finish, and you'll realize this is an excellent pairing. The Connecticut wrapper is commonly chosen to pair with tequila, and with Intemperance's blend of Indonesian binder and Nicaraguan and & Dominican filler, the interplay is spot-on.

Greg Mays is the Managing Editor of Simple Cocktails (simplecocktails.net). You can follow him on Instagram and Snapchat at @simplecocktails.

ROMA CRAFT TABAC INTEMPERANCE
WRAPPER: Ecuadorian Connecticut
BINDER: Indonesia
FILLER: Nicaragua & Dominican Republic
MSRP: $7

RON ZACAPA CENTENARIO SISTEMO SOLERA 23
COUNTRY: Guatemala
ABV: 40%
MSRP: $53.99

MONTECRISTO WHITE SERIES VINTAGE CONNECTICUT NO. 3
COUNTRY: Dominican Republic
WRAPPER: 2008 Connecticut Shade
BINDER: Nicaragua
FILLER: Peru, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua
SIZE: 5 ¼" X 44 Corona
MSRP: $10.50

MONTECRISTO WHITE SERIES VINTAGE CONNECTICUT NO. 3 WITH RON ZACAPA SOLERA 23 *By Benjamin Winokur*

Rare, vintage aged tobacco? Check. Silky Connecticut shade wrapper? Check! Exceptional craftsmanship and construction? Check again. These are just a few of the qualities possessed by the Montecristo Vintage Connecticut.

The Montecristo Vintage Connecticut No. 3 is a 5 ¼" X 44 corona that comes from the Tabacalera de García in the Dominican Republic. The filler is comprised of an expert blend of tobaccos from Peru, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua; it is finished off with a 2008 Vintage Connecticut Shade Grown wrapper. It should come as no surprise that this wrapper comes from Altadis' very own farm in Connecticut. Fun fact, the red barn and field on the label are images taken on that same farm.

To start off, this is a beautifully presented cigar with the unique box and band artwork. The cigar itself is no slouch either, once you remove that large center band you're faced with a golden-honey Connecticut shade wrapper that is smooth and velvety to the touch.
Upon lighting the Montecristo Vintage Connecticut is smooth and mild, offering soft touches of white and black pepper on the nose during retrohale, with buttery and cream notes throughout.

IT'S AMAZING THE WAY DIFFERENT FLAVORS INTERACT, AND HOW A SLIGHTLY STRONGER SPIRIT CAN BRING OUT FLAVORS IN A CIGAR, OR A STRONGER CIGAR SUPPLEMENTING FLAVORS IN A SOFTER SPIRIT.

Paired with the Montecristo Vintage Connecticut is a generous pour of Ron Zacapa 23 Solera, served neat. Fruity, sweet, and with a soft boozy tobacco on the nose, Zacapa 23 is a staple in my bar, going well with nearly any cigar you send its way-and this time is no exception.

Long on the finish with a rich full body of spiced dark chocolate, it is undeniably stronger than its pairing mate. The white and black pepper that come on the retrohale from each puff of the Montecristo Vintage Connecticut serves to tie the flavors together, creating an overall pairing of give and take. Oftentimes I work to find complimentary flavors, but in this one it's more about the contrast, and appreciating what each component of the pairing brings to the whole.

Moving through the second half of the Montecristo White Series Vintage Connecticut, the pepper ramps up on both the palate and nose, giving some extra body to the otherwise mellow smoke. Smooth through the end, the cigar never goes a tick above medium, resulting in a spirit dominant pairing where the Montecristo Vintage Connecticut is playing sidekick to the Ron Zacapa 23 Sistema Solera and its stronger and fuller body of flavor.

I really enjoy pairings like this from time to time because it makes me pause, and really analyze the smoke as it rolls across my palate. It's amazing the way different flavors interact, and how a slightly stronger spirit can bring out flavors in a cigar, or a stronger cigar supplementing flavors in a softer spirit.

FEATURED SPIRITS RATED

While this issue may be seemingly focused on cigars, it's always important to keep your home bar stocked with the best spirits available. Read on, and get to know 12 of our favorite spirits for the summer months, as rated by the Cigar & Spirits Tasting Panel.

BROCKMANS PREMIUM GIN

40% ABV | $34.99 MSRP

Best enjoyed neat or over ice, this gin features hints of coriander on the nose with hints of blueberry and blackberry. Intensely smooth body with a refreshing taste that offers notes of orange flavor with softer notes of blueberries and blackberries with a prolonged finish.

85 Cigar & Spirits RATING

GLENFIDDICH 18-YEAR SINGLE MALT SCOTCH

43% ABV | $99.99 MSRP

Remarkably rich nose aroma with orchard fruit, spice, apples and oak. Dried fruit, dates and elegant oak notes lead to a warm and rewarding finish.

94 Cigar & Spirits RATING

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DÉCADA TEQUILA SILVER

40% ABV | $46.99 MSRP

Brilliant clear color. Muted, grassy aromas of cucumber, banana leaf, yams and pear with a silky, soft, dry-yet-fruity light-to-medium body. Very elegant and flavorful sipping blanco.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

GARRISON BROTHERS TEXAS STRAIGHT BOURBON WHISKEY

47% ABV | $79 MSRP

Rich peanut brittle and burnt orange sunrise color. Fragrant fresh cut flowers and grass, rose petals and gardenias on the nose. Sweet rock candy taste of caramel apples, peanut butter and roasted pumpkin seeds. A lasting finish. Polished and refined. Roasted caramel, orange zest, cinnamon, sweet tea and tobacco.

88 Cigar & Spirits RATING

TATOOSH DISTILLERY RYE WHISKEY

43% ABV | $39.99 MSRP

Deep copper color with a rich pepper-infused oak on the nose. Light caramel and hints of vanilla on the palate that finishes with distinct white pepper and a mellow spicy woodiness.

DEATH'S DOOR GIN

47% ABV | $39 MSRP

Aromas of cream of wheat, brown sugar, licorice and soft peppery spices lead to a supple and soft mouth feel with a dry-yet-fruity medium/full body offering hints of citrus, peach custard and herbal juniper notes.

91 Cigar & Spirits RATING

90 Cigar & Spirits RATING

EL MAYOR AÑEJO TEQUILA

40% ABV | $34.99 MSRP

Caramel aroma on the nose, followed by sweet fruit and light oak. Smooth on the palate with a soft, medium-to-full bodied palate with caramel, grilled tropical fruit and brown spices.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

HANGER 1 VODKA

40% ABV | $35 MSRP

Fresh and slightly floral on the nose with Asian pear and hints of honeysuckle. Round and smooth on the palate with hints of sweetness. Light perfume on the finish and dries quickly on the palate.

92 Cigar & Spirits RATING

JOHNNIE WALKER BLACK LABEL

40% ABV | $30 MSRP

Pale amber in color, features an aroma of toasted grain, peat, and dried fruit. Masterfully balanced with a gentle fruit and buttercream finish.

89 Cigar & Spirits RATING

ROGUE FARMS OREGON SINGLE MALT VODKA

40% ABV | $48 MSRP

Oregon Single Malt Vodka is exceptionally smooth and balanced with a unique, characteristic sweetness from the Rogue Farms Risk™ Malt.

86 Cigar & Spirits RATING

ROGUE FARMS OREGON SINGLE MALT WHISKEY

40% ABV | $48 MSRP

Rogue Farms Oregon Single Malt Whiskey opens with an attractive aroma of floral honey, peach and mango. Medium-to-full bodied, the aromas slowly transition to lush, ripe fruit and brown spice.

90 Cigar & Spirits RATING

SQUEAL SPIGED BLACK RUM

45% ABV | $31 MSRP

Made with a molasses base, a deep rich spice is added giving notes of peppery oak, bright vanilla and a clean simple peach finish.

EVERYDAY CARRY ITEMS

THE ESSENTIALS

By Dave Johnson

NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE OR WHAT YOU DO, YOU PROBABLY CARRY CERTAIN ESSENTIAL ITEMS ON YOU. WHAT YOU CHOOSE FOR YOUR EVERYDAY CARRY (EDC) ITEMS SAYS A LOT ABOUT YOU. THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF POTENTIAL ITEMS TO CHOOSE FROM, SO LET'S NARROW IT DOWN AND DISCUSS A FEW OF MY TOP EDC RECOMMENDATIONS.

I think every man needs to carry at least three items at all times: a knife, a flashlight, and a pen. When you start carrying them, you realize just how convenient and essential they are.

The pen is self-explanatory- you always need something to write with. Whether it be signing receipts, taking notes or measurements, a pen is an easy suggestion, and probably something you use daily.

You also need a good flashlight. When you need to illuminate the night or a dark crevice a flashlight is your best friend. No, your crappy cellphone light doesn't count. Even the tiniest EDC flashlight out-performs your phone, making it worthwhile EDC selection.

Lastly, you need a good knife. A knife is perhaps my most-used tool that I carry. From cutting tape, boxes, strings on clothes, or opening plastic packaging, a knife is immensely practical and versatile. Once you start carrying one, you'll find it worth its weight in gold. A knife is perhaps the most difficult of the three choices to recommend due to the legality of many blades; often varying based on your locale. Every local governing region has laws regarding knives such as size and features—not to mention the rules your employer might impose. Regardless, it's still worth mentioning because of its usefulness. Just be certain you abide by the laws governing your municipality.

I believe that most EDC items can be categorized for two types of men: The Classy Guy, and The Badass, each with different aesthetics and values: sophistication versus power. It's a generalization, but I think all men can identify with one side more than the other.

FIRST UP, THE CLASSY GUY.

Nothing exudes class quite like a fountain pen. The Visconti Homo Sapiens Midi is a great choice which is both practical and beautiful. Its body is crafted from lava rock, giving it an interesting look and feel. The Midi is their slightly smaller Homo Sapiens pen. Its built-in piston converter makes ink refills easy, and the 24kt palladium nib is exceptionally smooth, with several sizes available. And if you aren't a fan of fountain pens, they also have ballpoint and rollerball versions. It oozes luxury and sophistication, and is sure to start conversations every time you bring it out. Price: $440

Few flashlights are built with as much class and quality as the Beta-QR by Prometheus Lights. I chose brass, but it is also available in copper and aluminum finishes. It is a simple twist-function light that runs on a AAA battery and has three modes offering 1, 15, and 85 lumens respectively with a fantastic naturally colored beam. It comes with a keychain quick-release with perfect attachment tension. If you don't like the keychain, you can replace it with an optional pocket clip, but I say keep it. The Beta-QR has all the light output you'll need and is simple to use, making it a very impressive EDC light. Price: $69

My last classy choice is the Chris Reeve Small Sebenza 21. The Sebenza is arguably the best production-made knife around. It's modern, opens smoothly, locks up like a bank vault, and has aerospace machining tolerances. I opted for the Insingo blade without inlays, but there are many options you can choose from such as; large and small versions, left-handed versions, inlay options (for grip and aesthetics), and either the standard drop point blade or Insingo blade. When you hold one, you'll understand. Simply put–it's perfection. Any knife and option you choose from Chris Reeve Knives is not only a classy choice, it's a world-class choice. Price: $350

NOW LET'S TALK ABOUT *THE BADASS*.

Karas Kustoms is a machining company that has made everything from car parts, pens, and even tops. The Render K is their first pen, and still my favorite among their line. With a simple twist cap and versatile Pilot G2 refill platform—upgradeable to Montblanc or Schmidt refills for extra cool points—its simplicity and quality of machining are unparalleled, making this an easy recommendation. The pens come in copper, brass, or various finishes of aluminum. My choice is copper, which is visually appealing with its patina and solid heft—but you don't care, you're a badass. Price: $95

The Olight S1 Baton is the brightest, smallest, simplest flashlight I've found, it also happens to be one of the best. It's easy to use with its side positioned switch, powered by a CR123 battery. The three main modes are 8, 80, and a blinding 500 lumens along with a hidden moonlight mode of .5 lumen and hidden strobe feature. It also has flat magnetic tail cap and removable pocket clip, which adds a ton of utility and convenience. It comes standard in black anodized aluminum, offering the option of a titanium upgrade, making this a great choice for the badass in you. Price: $79

For knives, no company has the attitude of **Zero Tolerance**—nor the quality to match it. Just a glance at the Zero Tolerance 0456 and you know why it's here. The sculpted titanium frame, flipper design, pop of blue, and angular lines all scream "cool". It's based on a custom knife from Dimitry Sinkevich, but doesn't dumb it down as a production knife. It has a CTS-204P steel blade, super-smooth ball-bearing pivot, and solid frame-lock design, making this knife a quality choice as well as a badass one. Price: $300

All of these choices are great, and you might find that you like items in both categories. Either way, you can't go wrong carrying these in your EDC rotation.

>> Chris Reeve Small Sebenza 21
Price: $350

>> Visconti Homo Sapiens Midi
Price: $440

>> Beta-QR by Prometheus Lights
Price: $69

>> Olight S1 Baton
Price: $79

>> Karas Kustoms Render K
Price: $95

>> Zero Tolerance 0456
Price: $300

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MASTERING

THE SHORT GAME

Ah, the short game. It seems like this is every amateurs' Achilles heel.

By Austin Peters, PGA

When it comes down to it, this is what makes or breaks your round–even as a pro. Let's face it, we all miss greens. If you didn't, you'd be ranked #1 in the world by a long shot. The trick is salvaging those misses by getting up and down.

Chipping and/or pitching are both used, but each have their own definition and approach to hitting the shot. Chipping is where you generally use a lower lofted club and try to roll the ball to the hole. Pitching is just the opposite, you generally use a higher lofted club and try to fly the ball closer to the hole. Now, while each shot selection has its time and place, I find that most amateurs instantly select that lob or sand wedge and go straight to hitting a pitch shot no matter what. This is, in fact, the first step that many of you must overcome. Your thought process should be the other way around. Whenever possible, always try to choose a lower lofted Club and "bump and run," or roll the ball to the hole. This is by far the better option in terms of improved consistency on ball contact, but also

The only difference really with the chip swing compared to the putting swing is the stance.

better consistency on proximity to the hole. Wrap your mind around this: Which is easier, putting or chipping/pitching? The correct answer is most definitely putting. Which is easier, hitting a spot with a shot a few feet in front of you or hitting a spot possibly 30 feet in front of you? When given the option between hitting a chip shot or hitting a pitch shot, always try to lean towards the chip.

Now let's go into the swing dynamics of each and once again show why hitting a chip, when you can, will prove to be more beneficial throughout the round. A chip shot is a shot you generally try and roll to the hole. When choosing to hit this shot you generally will use a less lofted club (8 iron, 9 iron, PW or sometimes a Gap wedge). By choosing one of these clubs you help lower the trajectory into a low running shot which is very similar to a putt. Like a putt, you will use the same short swing by only using your shoulders and, for the most part, locking everything else in place. Now while I say locking I don't mean turn into a robot. After all, short game has a lot to do with "feel" so keep that in mind. The only difference really with the chip swing compared to the putting swing is the stance. Your stance should be slightly open at about a 30-40 degree angle facing your target. The ball should be slightly farther away from you than it normally would be with a putter, and it should be slightly back (towards your back foot or away from the target) in your stance. The pitch is much different in just about every way. You'll use a more lofted club, swing harder at the shot, to the point you may even have to break your wrists and the ball position is slightly up in your stance if not in the middle. If you do break your wrists, it should be a natural motion of the swing. NEVER try and set your wrists, this will only lead to more complications. The only similar part to the chip and pitch is the same open stance. Get work on these two green-side saves and you'll see your scores lowering faster than you can say "Chip In!" If you follow these simple ideas, I promise that after a couple practice sessions you'll be getting up and down more often, and more consistently.

Austin Peters is a PGA Pro based out of the Los Angeles area. In 2015 he earned his entry to the PGA Championship after he placed T-5 in his debut at the PGA National Championship qualifying event. Today he continues to play in PGA Tour Events and offers lessons to professional, amateur, and beginning golfers alike. You can contact Austin via email at apeters@pga.com or by phone at (303) 475-0692.

The 2016 Cigar & Spirits

TASTING EVENT

By James Hills

Did you join us in June for the 6th Annual West Coast Cigar & Spirits Tasting event hosted by Cigar & Spirits Magazine and presented by Drew Estate Cigars and Ketel One Vodka. If you did then you were among the more than 600 enthusiasts that joined us for an evening complete with premium cigars, entertainment, and a chance to taste new spirits breaking into the market along with age old classics that we know well. As guests entered the pavilion where the event was held they were treated to a red carpet treatment, setting the mood for an evening where everyone could feel like a celebrity.

The thing I love about "festivals" is that it's a great opportunity to discover new things without feeling like you might have made a mistake. The downside of many other festivals though is that turns into a drunken party where everyone is sloppy. Not so at this event. Instead, the atmosphere was more like a group of friends hanging out and celebrating their mutual passion.

Sure, there was plenty to drink but this was about something more - the readers of Cigar & Spirits having an opportunity to feel special while meeting with reps from their favorite cigar and alcohol brands.

A favorite spirit vendor of the evening was Ketel One, who served mixologist inspired cocktails featuring their traditional and flavored vodkas. Also in attendance was Zacapa Rum, who offered a tasting and pairing seminar during the show which was exceptionally well received, and filled up within minutes of opening.

One of the more interesting vendors this year included "America's Smoothest Rum" Gubba Gold Rum from Colorado inspired by a rum that the owner discovered in St. Martin. Today, they use a technique that dates back to the 1800's to produce an exceptionally smooth sugar cane rum that's infused with fruits, spices and herbs.

For many people tequila is still a spirit that is met with a shake of the head, but the reality is that today's top tequilas are as high quality as any scotch. As it deserves to be, tequila was well represented that night but one of my new favorites is Tears of Llorona. It is a 100%

blue agave spirit that is aged for nearly five years in three different oak barrels that previously held scotch, sherry, and brandy. The final product is more like a cognac than a typical tequila because it has inherited some of the essence of each of those other spirits. While I enjoy margaritas as much as the next guy, this Extra Anejo is designed to be sipped slowly and enjoyed - perhaps while enjoying a fine cigar ...

Lucky for us, upon checking in, all guests were provided with a swag bag! These generous bags were filled with samples, swag, and perhaps best of all a punch card for cigar samples ranging from Drew Estate, Zander-Greg, Rocky Patel, Ventura Cigar Company, Alec Bradley and many more!

Guest then had the opportunity to walk around and meet with the more than a dozen cigar vendors who were sharing some of their finest product. One of the highlights of the evening were the exquisite ashtrays on display and provided by Gramm Works, who make several lines of CNC Machined Ashtrays and travel humidors, each fashioned from blocks of solid aluminum.

As guests explored new favorites and shared stories with friends they were also treated to live merengue dancers, aerialists, and live flamenco guitar playing.

While this year's event is over, we'll be announcing details for 2017 shortly and we hope to see even more of you here in beautiful sunny southern California for an evening of smoking and drinking with friends and your favorite brands.

This year was the biggest and most successful event in the six years of holding the West Coast Cigar & Spirits Tasting. We extend our thanks to all our sponsors; Ketel One Vodka, Drew Estate Cigars, Zacapa Rum, Montecristo Cigars, Ventura Cigar Company, NOLET'S Gin, Gubba rum, Zander-Greg Tobacco Products, and Decada Tequila and of course to you, our readers as well!

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